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THE FRAMING OF THE FIRST HUNGARIAN CITIZENSHIP LAW (ACT 50 OF 1879) AND THE ACQUISITION OF CITIZENSHIP

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In 1879, Hungarian legislators deemed it was time to settle the issue of citizenship once and for all. The moment was not chosen by mere accident, because the previous years had witnessed an upsurge of legislative acts striving to legally settle the question of who should belong to the states of Europe. The bill was discussed and opined by the Naturalization Committee of the Parliament. The most important problems were the naturalization and the absence. The first regulation of Hungarian citizenship according to the contemporary constitutional reforms and legal practice only took place in 1879. It is a major milestone in Hungarian citizenship law, since it also incorporated in its system the cases of acquisition and loss of citizenship. The law contains detailed provisions on how the legal relationship between the citizen and the state could be established and terminated. The objective of the law was to make the system of citizenship clear and transparent.

Keywords: legal history, constitutional law, citizenship, naturalization, loss of citizenship, acquisition, multiple citizenship, Naturalization Committee, parliamentary debate, absence, marriage, national status, dual monarchy

The antecedents of the first Hungarian citizenship law date back to the period of the Revolution and War of Independence of 1848. The bill submitted to the Parliament of 1847/48 already contained the conditions for the acquisition and loss of citizenship.[1] Due to the importance of the bourgeois transformation, however, the detailed debate of the proposal was subsequently taken off the agenda. Boldizsár Horváth, Minister of Justice, submitted another proposal in 1868, but this did not become law either, as it was not even debated by the Parliament.

Only after settling the most important issues of the age of dualism did the legislators consider the time as appropriate for the legal regulation of the question of citizenship.

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1. Archival Sources of the Citizenship Law of the Dual Monarchy (Act 50 of 1879)

When examining the history of citizenship law, in addition to secondary sources, we must give some attention to the primary sources available in the collections of the Parliament and various archives, most importantly the Hungarian National Archive.

The bill drafted for debate in the Parliament was received by the Minister of the Interior on August 21, 1879 (under number 38607).[2] György Lukács, Ministerial Councilor, sent a letter to the Prime Minister and attached the bill on the loss and acquisition of Hungarian citizenship, which had been formulated in the negotiations between the Minister of Justice and the Minister of the Interior. Some provisions of the bill were subsequently amended, and therefore the ministry attached a warrant explaining that the Minister of Justice had proposed further modifications.[3]

As concerning the bill, the Minister disapproved some of its aspects. Owing to the agreements on Section 11 and 21 of the bill, he deemed it necessary to insert the following provision in Section 31. In order to keep a record of the related details, decisions on naturalization were to be communicated to the Prime Minister on a case-by-case basis. Furthermore, he did not accept the wording of Section 47 saying that "those individuals who have been implicitly regarded as recognized citizens in the legal practice so far, shall preserve their status unless they will attest within one year as from the Act of the Parliament taking effect that they intend to preserve their foreign citizenship."[4] According to the Minister, this rule was not adequate, as it could not be trusted to a person's will that "he should be a Hungarian citizen or not, because [...] it would induce that those being liable to or having been enrolled to military service could exempt themselves or their sons from this liability with a simple declaration asserting that they wish to keep the allegiance to their former homeland as without being able to prove the preservation of the foreign citizenship by means of their passport or of any other document."[5] In the minister's opinion, this corollary was not to provide the bill with a retroactive force, but to make the prevalent practice more precise, as well as to facilitate the work of the competent authorities in the interim period. Finally, he wanted to modify the criteria of obtaining citizenship.[6]

Thus drafted, the bill was sent to the Minister Resident in the Royal Court in Vienna to have him request the pre-sanction of the bill, which then could be propounded to the parliamentary debate with the following caption: "Deferential propoundment to His Majesty, Emperor and Apostolic King by Kálmán Tisza, Royal Prime Minister of Hungary questing supreme permission to put the bill on the acquisition and loss of Hungarian citizenship forward in the Parliament for constitutional debate."[7]

The justification in the letter argued that in Hungary the issue of citizenship had still not been regulated by law, and to make up this deficiency a bill had been drafted as agreed on by the Minister of Justice, and approved by an earlier meeting of the Cabinet Council.[8] It introduced the most essential provisions of the bill. Citizenship could be acquired in four ways: by descent, legitimization, marriage, and naturalization. This latter case was given a detailed discussion as one that could acquire Hungarian citizenship if the person in question had been a foreigner, or could obtain a naturalization certificate from the competent authorities, or was awarded with a royal diploma of naturalization, and also took the oath of allegiance. It was emphasized that Section 8 listed the conditions to be met if one wanted to be naturalized by means of an authority certificate.[9] Such documents could be issued by the Hungarian Minister of the Interior, the Ban of Croatia, and the National Authority of the Border Region.[10] To ensure the adequacy of registration, the Prime Minister was to enter every single case of naturalization in a separate ledger. From the date of taking the oath of allegiance, any person naturalized in this way was considered to be a Hungarian citizen, yet some restrictions were conceived as necessary to be posed on them: they could not be members of the legislature immediately, and ennobled by the pure act of naturalization.

The letter also expounded the passages on the loss of citizenship. Citizens under the liability to military service could only be dismissed from allegiance if they were granted an emigration permit by the joint Minister of War. It highlighted that those persons who had been neither exempted from such liability, nor enrolled to military service could only be dismissed if the object of emigration was not the disengagement from liability to military service.[11] In wartime the right to make the related decision was to be reserved to the king. There was also to be a registry of dismissals. The letter specifically referred to Sections 38 to 45, which comprised the regulations for recovering citizenship, as well as for re-naturalization.

One of the final clauses stipulated that the act would not affect the citizenship of those who had obtained naturalization certificates before the effective date of the Act. Hungarian citizen would be those people who

> have resided on the territory of the countries under the Hungarian Crown for at least ten years without interruption before the effective date of this Act, even if in more than one location, and entered into the tax registry of any domestic township, unless they provide evidence within one year as from the effective date of this Act that they have maintained their foreign citizenship.[12]

The Minister justified the addition of this latter deadline to the bill by arguing that a person who had long been living in the territory of the Hungarian state and benefited from "all the rights of national residents"[13] should not subsequently avoid fulfilling the related civil obligations. Naturally, the King approved the re-

quest, and empowered the Prime Minister to put the bill forward in the Parliament.[14]

Prime Minister Kálmán Tisza personally contributed to Hungary's first law on citizenship;[15] and the bill was discussed and opined by the Naturalization Committee of the Parliament.

2. Work in the Naturalization Committee

In 1879 Hungarian legislation deemed it was time to settle the issue of citizenship once and for all. The previous years had witnessed an upsurge of legislative acts striving to legally settle the question of who should belong to the states of Europe (Germany Act of 1870, Switzerland Act of 1876, Italy Civil Code of 1865, Great Britain Act of 1870). This international wave was joined by Hungary, when on 8 October 1879 Prime Minister Kálmán Tisza introduced the bill on the "acquisition and loss of Hungarian citizenship" to the House of Representatives. The justification of the bill identified as main reasons the need for, on the one hand, the clearing up of a rather confused legal situation, and on the other hand the protection of the interests of the Hungarian state.[16] The proposal law was intended to fill in a substantial gap, since the loss of citizenship, apart from the case of a Hungarian woman marrying a foreigner, had not been regulated by national laws so far.

The House of Representatives, immediately upon the Prime Minister's proposition, set up a 15-member naturalization committee on the very same day. The representative in charge of the issue, Jenő Péchy praised the proposed act as one that is

> generally filling in such a gap, as well as satisfies such an old desire of the public that we can safely say that our Government could not have possibly healed a more serious wound than it did by its declared intention to regulate by law the so far unattended issues of citizenship and naturalization.[17]

As concerning the principles of the bill, Jenő Péchy specified three essential "governing conceptions": equality, the principle of the one and the same citizenship, and "the special Hungarian nature."[18] After the ceremonious address by the committee presenter, Nándor Szederkényi, an opposition representative disclosed his observations to the Parliament. In his contribution he criticized the government for trying to put the bill through the Parliament with excessive haste. "This bill is not debated in accordance with its significance,"[19] and owing to the brevity of time[20] the representatives could not make serious inquiries. He joined issue with Jenő Péchy about "the special Hungarian nature" of the bill, when considering the proposition from another point of view, he declared:

> ... this bill is anything but of Hungarian nature. This bill fosters general cosmopolitanism, establishes – what is the most injurious to Hungary – common soil with Austria, against which the Hungarian state and Hungarian citizens always object to.[21]

At this point, Representative Szederkényi uttered his opinion that the part of the proposition related to the naturalization and re-naturalization of foreigners primarily produced "exceptional conditions with Austria." In this respect he motioned that it should not be the monarch, but the legislative body that was to be vested with the right of naturalizing foreigners, and those persons naturalized in this way should not be allowed to be members in the Hungarian legislation or the Hungarian Crown Council; furthermore, in order to reinforce the special Hungarian nature of the act, the addressee of the oath of allegiance should be the King of Hungary instead of "His Majesty, Emperor and Apostolic King." He even proposed to eliminate the passage of Section 32 outright that was the most ardently challenged in the course of the whole parliamentary debate for stipulating that if Hungarian citizens keep away from the monarchy for ten years without interruption and permission, they should lose their Hungarian citizenship (Szederkényi suggested applying this provision only to foreigners having been naturalized, while in the case of "natives" forfeiture of the title should be judged according to their merits).[22]

On the basis of the Resolution by the Naturalization Committee No. 1685 passed on 8 October the bill was discussed, and the related report was drafted at the meeting held on 18, 19 and 20 October. The Prime Minister's justification attached to the bill was meant to be conclusive about the requisiteness of the proposal, since the lack of such legal regulation could be felt even by the general public for years.[23] Substantial amendments were made only to Section 10 and 11 stipulating that the right to grant Hungarian citizenship to persons in the country of Croatia and Slavonia, as well as in the Border Region should be vested to the Hungarian Cabinet Council, specifically the Prime Minister.

The bill was drafted with an eye to the unity of the Hungarian state and in conformity with similar laws of the Western European countries. The principle of equal rights was also taken into consideration. In accordance with Section 48, the Border Region as a separate authority would be organized to a term until its territory was administratively unified with the country of Croatia and Slavonia. The Committee also made some concessions with regard to the acquisition of citizenship by adopted foreigners (Section 8).[24]

Dissents were attached to Sections 1, 15, 30, 32 and 37. New Hungarian citizens could not be citizens of other states at the same time, except for the members of the royal house, because it would have gone against the idea of Hungarian statehood in the face of emphasizing the "individuality of the Hungarian state" and accentuating the "Hungarian nature of citizenship."[25]

The idea of multiple citizenship was not conceded, as it could have occasioned political misuse, and generated enormous tangles and "complications" also in the field of private law. There existed obligations that could have been evaded in this manner (e.g., military service). In the event a person had been the citizen of two states being at war with each other, he would have had to be neutral in the conflict, or betray his oath of allegiance to one or the other of the countries. Hungary and Austria were exceptions, since there were 40 to 50 Austrian families that also held Hungarian citizenship. According to the bill, they were required to declare their decision within one year "whether they want to preserve their Hungarian or Austrian citizenship."[26] As a principle, the exclusivity of Hungarian citizenship had been accepted by the bill on citizenship drafted by László Szalay in 1847. Therefore, it was requisite to stipulate in Section 20 that "Hungarian citizenship shall be lost by those entering the tie of another state,"[27] while Section 37 was intended to be completely omitted. The committee also wanted to regulate that persons naturalized by means of the royal diploma should not be the members of the legislature immediately. Besides, the committee's minority opinion called for the cancellation of Sections 30 and 32, because such provisions disagreed with the principle that Hungarian citizens, just like their American or English counterparts, could preserve their Hungarian citizenship everywhere and for all times until they voluntarily renounced it.[28] This could not be in the interest of the Hungarian nation.

Under Section 30 of the bill, persons living abroad would lose their citizenship if they did not return in response to the so-called "gazette summons" initiated by the government at its own discretion. Apart from the restriction on personal freedom, this solution lodged too a large power in the hands of the government. Also, gazette summons were not regarded as expedient because it could not be required from Hungarian citizens residing abroad that they read official gazettes. In accordance with Section 32, citizens living abroad for more than ten years could return "only as foreigners."[29] Such a provision was found to be justified by the committee for countries with overpopulation (Germany). On the other hand England constituted a situation where the period could also be characterized as one of overpopulation, but no one was divested from their citizenship in their absence. Thus, the legislators opined that such regulation would have been proper neither in Hungary, because "the elimination of every single citizen can be considered as a loss."[30]

Another reason why the Committee was unwilling to approve the provision was that it would deprive not only the citizen of his national status, but his family residing with him, as well. For example, if a Hungarian citizen got married abroad and had children, who were – for the time being – also qualified as Hungarians, and then the father happened to stay abroad for ten years, every member of the family would lose their citizenship. The representatives viewed this part of the proposal pronouncedly erroneous as owing to the fact that if someone lost his citi-

zenship without either being willing to be a subject of another state, or being the citizen of any other state, then he would be a foreigner to the whole world. The minority opinion held that no one might wish such a grievous destiny to any Hungarian citizen.[31]

At the meeting of the House of Representatives held on 5 November Representative Aladár Molnár submitted one, while Representative Károly Csider put forward two proposals that the committee debated on the same day. Aladár Molnár motioned that Paragraph 2 of Section 37 be cancelled, and naturalization under Section 17 be given effect by allowing the person naturalized to be immediately the member of the national legislation, only if the citizen could prove that he had been dismissed from the state he had belonged to, and on condition that such dismissal did exist under the laws of the state in question. Later, Aladár Molnár amended his proposal by suggesting that it should be applied not only to Section 17, but to the whole act, as well. The Committee did not accept either the original, or the amended proposal, saying that "it would disagree with an already established principle of the bill, the possibility of dual citizenship."[32] Yet, the Committee supported that immediate membership in the national legislature should be restricted in the ten years required by Section 15 of the Act as corresponding to the proposal. Consequently, they proposed the insertion of a new passage after Section 17.

> The unusual extent effect of naturalization under Section 17 whereby a person thus naturalized may become a member of the national legislation immediately after naturalization is to be applied only, if the person naturalized proves that he has been dismissed from the state he belonged to, provided that such dismissal is permitted under the laws of the given state.[33]

By his proposal Representative Károly Csider intended to achieve the insertion of the following new passage after Section 42: "As in accordance with Section 9, applications for naturalization shall be submitted to the authorities being competent under the Applicant's belonging to the township tie specified in Sections 39, 40, 41, 42."[34] The Committee accepted the motion, though according to their opinion the proposed regulation had been implicitly in the bill. Therefore, admitting the proposal, they inserted an additional Section following Sections 42. This passage of the bill asserted that in cases under Sections 39, 40, 41, and 42 any application for re-naturalization should be submitted to the authorities being competent under the Applicant's belonging to the township tie, and specified in Section 9. In the event there was no such a township tie, because the Applicant's admission was in progress, he had to submit his application to the authority that had previously undertaken his admission.

In his second motion, the representative requested to insert after Section 43 that the time period of the citizenship having been lost earlier should be counted in the ten years that was required from the person naturalized to be the member of the national legislation by Section 15 of the bill. This regulation would have been in effect only for re-naturalized persons, and the motion was also supported by the committee. In general, they backed up the idea to provide re-naturalized persons with more favorable conditions as concerning the practice of political rights.

On 30 October Pál Hoffmann and Sándor Dárday presented new proposals for amendments to the Naturalization Committee. The proposals concerned Section 3, 4, 5, and 19 of the bill. First, Pál Hoffmann's motion was discussed, but they disapproved even its structural framing, as it intended to combine the above-mentioned passages in two paragraphs.

The first proposal considered the issue of who were to be regarded as Hungarian citizens:

- members of the royal house (so much it stood to reason to the Representatives as they did not want to concretize it);
- any Hungarian citizen's legitimate children, even if they were born abroad;
- those legitimized;
- those acquiring citizenship by marriage.

The second proposal then put some supplementary lettering to Section 3 (e.g., following the word "acquire" the expression "Hungarian citizenship" was to be inserted in the bill). However, Representative Dárday's motion for stylistic amendments was not accepted.

3. The Detailed Parliamentary Debate of the Proposition

What followed was the debate of the bill in the House of Representatives. Nándor Szederkényi in his opinion presented earlier was joined by Lajos Mocsáry, who in his speech declared:

> I cannot accept the bill in question as a subject of detailed debate, especially with respect to the fact that this bill contains elements whereby I regard the notion of Hungarian statehood ... being contested ... and I fully share the opinion of my honorable friend, Nándor Szederkényi that here a certain novel contrivance, namely the principle of common Austrian Hungarian citizenship hs emerged, and came to the foreground.[35]

He reckoned to reveal deviation from the current legal practice in the non-observance of two particular legal principles:

> … no Hungarian citizen may be deprived of his civil rights until he has requested the same. This is one of the essential characteristics of the Hungarian conception. While cardinal issue is that naturalization is a right reserved not to the monarch, but to the Parliament.[36]

As concerning Section 32, it was Mocsáry, who could put into words most unequivocally the objective of the government as conceived by the opposition:

> Are you aware of the consequences of enacting this law? You are turning Kossuth himself an exile. Because if he should come back, his return will not even enable him to be elected a representative. I personally hope that the nation will not expatriate the faithful from her heart, but expatriate those who want to exile Lajos Kossuth, those who do not shrink from extending the scope of common affairs, those who do not shrink from introducing such a bill to debate. I myself cannot accept the bill as a subject of detailed debate.[37]

On behalf of the Government, it was Minister of Justice Tivadar Pauler and Prime Minister Kálmán Tisza who briefly responded to opposition claims. Throughout the detailed debate, the possibility of dual citizenship also heated the passions. According to Imre Veszter, "there are hardly any issues in private law that would not turn into most diverse and labyrinthine complications under the unrestricted retention of dual citizenship,"[38] and to resolve this situation he suggested that persons entering the tie of another state should lose their Hungarian citizenship and that foreigners should not be naturalized in Hungary until they proved their dismissal on condition that such dismissal did exist under the laws of their homeland; and if the country in question did not concede the legal institution of dismissal, such foreigners should declare in the Hungarian oath of allegiance "that during being the citizens of the Hungarian state: they will not exercise the rights arising from their former citizenship."[39]

Pál Hoffmann moved to settle the same issue with a quintessential amendment: "allegiance binding to any foreign state cannot be on terms with the capacity of being a Hungarian citizen."[40] In his response, Kálmán Tisza explained:

> … the Hungarian state would be in a – I do not want to say – subordinate, but in any case worse situation compared with other states, if she declared that whoever is the citizen of another state, cannot be the citizen of the Hungarian state ... and when considering the prestige of the state and the dignity of the state, I hold it as more appropriate ... if a state enounces: everyone can remain my citizen until I rule otherwise, regardless of what other countries may do with them.[41]

This argumentation proved to be imposing, and the original wording that had generated much controversy was maintained: "Section 1: Citizenship in the countries of the Hungarian Holy Crown shall be one and the same."

The next focal point of disagreement surfaced with the debate on the legal institution of naturalization by means of a royal diploma for outstanding merits. From the side of the opposition, the conception was first challenged by Albert Apponyi. In his speech, he explained that the introduction of the new legal institution would have constituted a break with the old tradition of public law, since it gave rise to a way of acquiring citizenship from which the Parliament would be excluded; the initiative lay in the hands of the government, while the act was made effective as sanctioned by the royal diploma. In the evolving debate it was Aladár Molnár who could put the problem the most clearly:

> The question ... is who should grant this benefit bestowed for merits, and who is to judge those merits? According to the proposition, it is the Government, and under their proposal the monarch: in Count Apponyi's motion, as corresponding to the long established practice, it is the Parliament, whose resolution shall then be sanctioned by the monarch.[42]

Opposition debaters argued by listing foreign examples, and envisioned the "dreadful" picture of the native Hungarian rendered to minority status in his own legislative body.[43] In addition, all their speeches reflected the underlying principle of the opposition, which was stressed throughout the whole parliamentary debate: struggle against the increase of Austrian influence.

The governmental side characterized the proposition as a practical device to award outstanding merits instantly, and in order to "calm" down the opposition they emphasized the guarantee ensured by the supervision of the government by the Parliament. After that, the issue was decided upon by roll-call voting that brought about a majority for the original proposition.[44]

Discussions on the right of the Ban of Croatia to grant citizenship were accompanied by an exceptionally heated debate. In accordance with Section 10 of Act 30 of 1868, often mentioned as the Croatian–Hungarian Compromise, "as concerning the issues of citizenship and naturalization, there shall be common legislation, but the execution of such regulations shall be reserved to the countries of Croatia–Slavonia and Dalmatia." In the course of the detailed debate of the law on citizenship, however, the majority of the Naturalization Committee presented such a draft to the representatives that would assign the execution to the Cabinet Council and the Prime Minister across the whole of the territory of the Hungarian Crown. This contrasted with the original wording by the Government, as well as with the above-quoted regulation of the law. In his speech, the presenter touched upon the issues of execution, state sovereignty and the relevant points in the Cro-

atian–Hungarian public law agreement. Finally, after a heated debate the green light was given to the original governmental conception, that is the naturalization right of the Ban of Croatia.[45]

As has been mentioned above, it was Section 32 that generated the most heated passions and ardent opinions, as it intended to introduce the loss of citizenship after 10 years of absence to Hungary's law. The opposition designated the proposition as an open governmental assault against political emigrants, which at the same time determined the orientation of the evolving debate. The weight of legal argumentation was dwarfed by political speeches and contributions echoing apprehension for the nation.[46] The governmental side tried to soothe the opposition (and its own conscience) by asserting that the retention of citizenship was bound to a simple declaration that, owing to its insignificance, could not seriously conflict even with the principles of emigrants. On the opposition side, this approach was confronted with the words by Ignác Helfy, who observed, "When a political conviction or a political act is concerned, it cannot be the question whether it is large or small. In political matters, it is not the largeness of the act that raises importance, rather the inherent humiliation."[47] At the end of the passionate debate that tended to involve personal remarks, the opposition presented a united front for Ernő Simonyi's amendatory motion. "Section 33: Provisions of Section 32 will not apply to those having emigrated for political reasons."[48]

On behalf of the Government, the Prime Minister, Kálmán Tisza took the floor, and asked the Honorable House to disapprove the proposal. He argued that the institution of re-naturalization was regulated in Section 41 of the bill, and on the basis of the related provisions persons returning to Hungary could automatically regain their lost citizenship by being admitted to the tie of any township; consequently, the opposition's accusation of expatriation was not true. Eventually, Tisza tried to highlight the underlying logic of the government's proposition in the summary of his speech:

> As far as I am concerned, I consider it [i.e., Simonyi's amendatory motion] as one that cannot be accepted, because firstly ... citizenship rights can be actively exercised only by persons that are in the country ... and secondly because – as I have said – everywhere in the world those who want to exercise citizenship rights may disapprove some laws, but are nevertheless obliged to acknowledge being subject to such laws ... thirdly because ... it may indeed grant liberty of those who act against the existence of the Hungarian state, not only condemning the laws of the country, but subverting her existence. I myself will not approve the motion, and implore the Honorable House far as not to approve it ..., but omit the passage proposed.[49]

The majority in the House of Representatives did listen to their Prime Minister again, and in the roll-call vote, by a vote of 193 representatives out of the 442 be-

ing validly present – since the Chairman did not vote –, they dismissed Ernő Simonyi's amendatory proposal with 141:52, and finally, the original wording by the government was accepted.

The remaining sections of the bill were discussed by the House of Representatives without notable disputes, and at last on 8 November 1879, after the third reading, the representatives approved the bill with 88 yeas and 73 nays; then it was sent over to the Upper House for discussion and consent.

Again, the bill was discussed, and after the general and principle debate it was approved. This procedure was followed by the detailed debate, wherein the Upper House accepted the title of the act, as well as Sections 1 to 3 with no modification. After reconciliation with Sections 5, 6, and 3, Section 4 was proposed to be accepted as follows: "By means of legitimization, citizenship may be obtained by the illegitimate children of Hungarian citizens born to foreign women."[50] Sections 5 to 13 were also approved without any amendments. For taking the oath (affirmation) specified in Section 14, the Upper House referred to the significance and solemnity of the act, and wished the form of the oath to be conceived accordingly. When making reference to His Majesty's name, they proposed to use the address of "His Majesty, Emperor and King, Apostolic King of Hungary" instead of "His Majesty, Apostolic King of Hungary."[51] The following sections of the bill, up to Section 29 were accepted with no modifications. In the second line of Section 30, they intended to omit the conjunction "also" from the text, since they deemed it as confusing to comprehension. The Upper House did not change Sections 31 to 47, either. On the other hand, in the fourth and fifth line of the second paragraph of Section 48 they wished to replace the words "Croatian Border Region" with the expression of "Croatian–Slavonian Border region. The next sections were accepted without any amendments, as well. After that, the bill with the above amendments was accepted by the Upper House, and "on this decision, the House of Representatives shall be informed in order to hold the constitutional debate, as well as to obtain their kind consent."[52]

The Naturalization Committee discussed the proposals on 20 November and approved the amendments to Sections 4, 30, and 48, as well as the form of the oath. This latter modification was accepted only because it corresponded to the legal practice of the time.[53]

In the form of a legislative act, the authentic text of the accepted bill was sent to the Prime Minister by György Lukács.[54] Indeed, he forwarded the bill that had been worded by the Naturalization Committee. In this proposition, amendments having been approved by the House of Representatives and the Upper House were entered as handwritten.[55] Apart from some minor stylistic changes, the Upper House approved the whole text of the bill, which then was submitted to Emperor

Franz Joseph; he sanctioned the bill on 20 December 1879, and it came into force on January 5, 1880.[56] The new act completely corresponded to conditions in Hungary in the period.[57]

4. Acquisition of Citizenship

In Hungarian constitutional history the system of citizenship was based on the right of lineage, which meant that children inherited their fathers' citizenship. The majority of Hungarian citizens in the second half of the nineteenth century were natural born Hungarians, who had acquired their citizenship by way of lineage.

The first citizenship law defined the following cases whereby Hungarian citizenship could be acquired: *descent, legitimization, naturalization,* and *marriage.* [58] This listing in the law was complete; in other words there were no other ways of obtaining citizenship.[59] According to some researchers, additional ways also included retrieving and acquiring citizenship on the basis of "an old right" (or "implicitly").[60] After the framing of the law, the number of legal titles further increased. Act 4 of 1886 introduced the institution of re-admission for the large number of those re-settling in Hungary.[61] Hungarian citizenship could therefore be acquired in a direct and an indirect way. In the first group the only possibility was birth. These citizens could be called "native Hungarians" *(Hungari nativi).*[62] In the second group belong the received or naturalized Hungarians *(Hungari recepti),* who obtained citizenship by way of legalisation, naturalisation or marriage.[63]

The voluntary intention originating in one's own resolve, which was among the objectives of the law, was fully asserted in case of naturalization only.[64]

According to Hungarian citizenship law, entering state service did not automatically result in obtaining citizenship. The only exception was when the moving into the country was for the purpose of settling down permanently and the acquisition of residence in a township was already under way.[65]

The ministerial justification of the law specifically mentions the German regulations of 1870, in harmony with which the bill of 1879 was drafted. The German citizenship law defined the legal titles of acquiring citizenship in a way that was identical with the Hungarian law.

4.1. Descent

Anybody who was a legitimate child of a Hungarian father, or who was born to a mother of Hungarian citizenship was also a Hungarian citizen.[66] This rule was also applied if the place of birth was abroad.[67] This legal provision had been in effect even before the passing of the citizenship law, since such people were called the "sons of the home country" *(nativi Hungari, patriae filii).*[68] If a man of Hungarian citizenship married a foreign woman, their children were Hungarian citizens, since the wife lost her original citizenship by reason of the marriage. The children would also be Hungarian citizens if the mother was a Hungarian citizen and the father a foreigner. Children born out of wedlock by a foreign mother would also be considered as natural born Hungarian citizens, if they were legitimized subsequently. Legitimization (marriage and royal legitimization) was basically the subsequent recognition of citizenship based on birth.[69]

According to Hungarian constitutional law, if somebody lost his or her Hungarian citizenship, this would never be automatically regained. In such cases citizenship would have to be re-acquired.[70]

There were some states (England, Denmark, Portugal, etc.), which recognized children born on their territories as their own citizens on the basis of the territorial principle *(jus soli),* regardless of what citizenship their parents had. The Hungarian citizenship law only allowed this principle to be asserted in some extraordinary cases. Such a case was, for example, if a child was born in the territory of the country, but nothing was known of the citizenship of his or her parents, and therefore, lineage could not be used to determine the actual citizenship of the child.[71] The same principle had to be used in case of foundlings whose parents were not known at all.[72] In both cases it was presumed that the parents were Hungarian citizens since the birth took place on the territory of the Hungarian state. Such a presumption, however, could be disproved.[73]

4.2. Marriage

Citizenship could be obtained by way of marriage[74] if a foreign woman married a man of Hungarian citizenship. In such cases the change in the marital status of the foreign woman *ipso facto* resulted in the change of her citizenship.[75] Her new citizenship acquired by way of marriage was not subsequently lost even if she was widowed or divorced.[76] Naturally, only legally concluded marriages had such legal consequences, since invalid, void, or contestable marriages, according to Section 37 of the law, only had such an effect until the invalidity of the marriage was pronounced by a final judgment of the court.[77]

4.3. Naturalization[78]

Foreign nationals could acquire Hungarian citizenship by a deed of naturalization or by a royal diploma, as a result of which both they and their descendants would become Hungarian citizens. The institution of acquisition of citizenship by way of a deed of naturalization was also known before 1879, since the Hungarian Royal Minister of the Interior issued such documents from 1867, which also remained in effect after the entry into force of the citizenship law of 1879.[79]

A foreigner who had not acquired citizenship by way of simple naturalization[80] or by way of a deed of naturalization issued after 1867 could only acquire Hungarian citizenship after 8 January 1880 by way of naturalization under the new law, even if the person had continuously lived on the territory of the country before and exercised the rights of Hungarian citizens.

Hungarian constitutional law recognized two methods of naturalization: simple naturalization and special naturalization.[81] The emphasis in both cases was on the definite expression of will and acting according to prescribed forms, and therefore, no one could become a Hungarian citizen implicitly, nor could one become a citizen in the absence of certain basic conditions.

The following conditions had to be met for simple naturalization. The applicant had to have unlimited capacity of action, or in the absence of such capacity, his or her guardian's consent had to be obtained. The applicant also had to either be a resident of a local township, or at least the procedure for such purpose had to have been initiated. Communities could not be forced to hold out the prospect of admittance to the township in case of naturalization.[82] The applicant had to have lived in the territory of the Hungarian state for an uninterrupted period of five years. He had to have been of impeccable conduct, had to have an income or wealth sufficient for maintaining himself and his family, and also had to have been on the list of taxpayers for at least five years.[83] The law, on the other hand, had no provisions for the examination of the applicant's emotional attachment as to whether he was to become a member of the Hungarian state not only materially and physically, but also morally and spiritually.[84] In addition, the law did not require a physical or mental examination either.[85]

According to the above conditions, the applicant had to have either unlimited capacity to action or his representative by law (guardian or trustee) would act on his behalf in the procedure. Only persons of legal age and capacity to act were able to request naturalization. Married women living with their husbands could only obtain Hungarian citizenship on the right of their husbands. A married woman could only acquire Hungarian citizenship if she lived separated, or the court had dissolved her marriage, or she was "separated from bed and board,"[86] or she was widowed. A legitimate child could request naturalization on the right of his or her father, or on the right of the mother, if she was widowed. A child could also be nat-

uralized at the request of either the father or the mother, if he or she acted as the child's legally appointed guardian.

The issuance of a promise of admittance to the township was reserved to the powers of the autonomous rights of the village or the town, which could only be practiced under the general decree of the Minister of the Interior no. 44.967/920. Aspects of national interests also had to be taken into consideration.[87]

The five years' domestic residence requirement had to have been fully met. The existence of immovable property had to be evidence by way of an extract from the land registration, movable property by way of an official certificate, and the payment of taxes by way of an extract from the tax registry.[88] Tax paid by a woman was taken into account for her husband, as was tax paid by the father for his child. Arrears in the payment of taxes were not necessarily a cause of refusal to the application. (The tax payment requirements set forth by the law, however, could not be met by paying the taxes in advance for five years.)

The simple legal fact of adoption, therefore, did not automatically result in the acquisition of Hungarian citizenship, but it did make it easier to meet the conditions.[89]

The naturalization procedure was always initiated by way of an application. The mere satisfaction of the prescribed conditions did not automatically result in the acquisition of Hungarian citizenship; it only opened the possibility to acquire citizenship.[90] It was the prerogative of the Minister of the Interior to decide who could become a Hungarian citizen. An applicant would only become a Hungarian citizen when they took the oath of allegiance. A deed of naturalization was considered as evidence of the acquisition of citizenship if the date of naturalization was entered on the document by the competent authority. The oath of allegiance had to be taken within one year from the receipt of the writ issued by the authority; otherwise, the applicant's passive conduct caused the loss of the opportunity for becoming a Hungarian citizen. The citizen also had the right, however, to revoke the deed of naturalization in justified cases if the oath of allegiance had not yet been taken.[91]

Naturalization by royal diploma took place only in special and extraordinary cases. Persons could thus receive Hungarian citizenship who had outstanding achievements in the interest of the country, "who have become worthy of Hungarian citizenship in the service of the Hungarian people."[92] The Minister of the Interior proposed to the king who should receive such a diploma without the prospects of admittance to any local township or without having to meet the five years' residency requirement or inclusion in the tax registry. In such cases Budapest was always entered as the place of residence, except if the person thus naturalized received admittance to some other township in the meantime. Even such persons had to take the oath of allegiance, however.[93]

It must also be noted that neither simple nor extraordinary naturalization granted a title of nobility. A naturalized citizen could not be elected to the office of keeper of the crown and a person naturalized by deed could only become a member of the House of Representatives after ten years, or a member of the Upper House by way of the Parliament (Act 7 of 1885).[94]

The annexes required by the law had to be attached to the application and certified. The applicant had to submit the documents to the highest official of the local authority according to his place of residence (the sub-prefect of the county or the mayor of the city).[95] This rule also applied if the applicant received a promise of admission from another township. The officials examined the application in terms of form and content, and then presented the documents, complete with justification, to the Minister of the Interior. If they found the application deficient in any respect, then they called upon the applicant to submit further documentation. If the Minister of the Interior considered the applicant as worthy of Hungarian citizenship, then he issued the deed of naturalization.[96] Otherwise, he rejected the application and notified the competent authority of his decision. The competent authority would then notify the decision to the applicant: if the decision was favorable, then the place and time for taking the oath of allegiance was given; otherwise, the documents submitted were returned along with the letter of rejection.[97] The wording of the oath of allegiance was the following: "I, N. N., swear by the living God (affirm) that I shall be faithful to His Imperial and Royal Majesty, the Apostolic King of Hungary, and to the Constitution of the countries of the Royal Crown, and shall loyally perform my obligations as a Hungarian citizen."[98] A documentary record was taken of the oath, which was to be signed by the applicant, who subsequently received the deed of naturalization and his personal documents. The authorities had to notify the Minister of the Interior of the taking of the oath. The Minister by turn would notify the Prime Minister and the Royal Hungarian Bureau of Statistics.[99]

People who had lived for a period of at least five uninterrupted years before the coming into force of the first citizenship law on the territory of the Hungarian Crown and were on the list of taxpayers in the registry of a township were also considered to be Hungarian citizens, provided that they did not notify the competent authority according to their place of residence that they wished to maintain their foreign citizenship.[100]

Austrian citizens could only be naturalized in Hungary, like Hungarians in Austria, if they were first dismissed from Austrian or Hungarian citizenship, respectively, in accordance with the Treaty of 1870.[101]

4.4. Favored naturalization (re-naturalization)[102]

The main difference between favored naturalization and the previously described procedure was that the former could only be applied to originally Hungarian citizens, while naturalization was a procedure reserved for foreign citizens. Not all former Hungarian citizens could use this easier procedure. Those who were excluded from Hungarian citizenship by an authority's decision did not qualify. Such persons had seriously violated their obligations as citizens. Those who had lost their Hungarian citizenship by way of legitimization, and were therefore considered as foreigners on the basis of the citizenship of their fathers, also belonged to this circle.[103] A person could acquire a new citizenship both by way of naturalization and re-naturalization, but there was still a significant difference between the two situations, since in the latter case, only the legal ties had been broken "between the Hungarian state and its son, who lost his Hungarian citizenship, yet the ethical ties were not broken."[104]

Several groups could be established within the circle of those subject to favorable naturalization. A person who had lost his citizenship by way of dismissal or absence and did not obtain another citizenship could be re-naturalized as a citizen even if he had not returned to the country in the meantime. Such a person would be given admittance to his former township upon re-naturalization. If a person obtained a new citizenship, he could only be re-naturalized if he returned to the territory of Hungary and a township promised to admit this person as a resident. In the latter case, the Minister of the Interior had no room for discretion, unlike in the former situation.

Additional advantages were provided by the citizenship law to women and minors. A woman who had lost her citizenship not independently but by way of the dismissal or absence of her husband, or by way of marriage to a foreigner, was given Hungarian citizenship, provided that her marriage had terminated, and she had already initiated the procedure for admittance to a township. A minor, on the other hand, who had lost his citizenship by reason of his father's dismissal or absence was re-naturalized as a Hungarian citizen when either he became of legal age or his father died, provided that his admittance to a township was under way.[105]

Documents proving that such a person had formerly been a Hungarian citizen had to be submitted with the application.[106] In all other respects the procedure was the same as in case of simple naturalization.[107]

The ten-year rule for becoming a member of the legislature did not apply to re-naturalized persons, except if they originally acquired their citizenship by naturalization not more than ten years before.[108]

4.5. Naturalization of re-settlers in large numbers

The above provisions applied to emigrants and their immediate family members, and did not take into consideration the return of the descendants of Hungarians, who had left the country several generations before. To fill in this gap, Act 4 of 1884 extended the provisions of the citizenship law relating to favored naturalization.[109] The date when the applicant's forbears left the country could not be taken into consideration. The township to which the applicant was to belong to had to be established by the authority, and several applicants intending to settle in the same place could submit a joint application for naturalization.[110]

4.6. Legitimization

An illegitimate child born to a Hungarian man and a foreign citizen woman could acquire Hungarian citizenship by way of legitimization. The subsequent marriage of such a child's parents was to have the result on the child's citizenship as if they had been born in wedlock.[111] A naturalized father's citizenship did not extend to his legitimized children, if they were already of legal age. In such a case the children were only able to obtain Hungarian citizenship by way of ordinary naturalization. Legitimization was to have a retroactive force to the date of the child's birth.[112] The precise order of procedure was not defined by the law; therefore, subsequent marriage and royal legitimization had the same effect.[113]

It can be observed that in subsequent citizenship laws less and less room was available for state interference. One by one, the reasons used for the enforcement of the peculiar legal principles of the age were removed from among the conditions.

Notes

1 Károly Kisteleki, "Az állampolgárság a dualizmus idején" [Citizenship at the Time of the Dual Monarchy], *Állam és Jogtudomány,* (1996–1997): 42.

2 Országos Levéltár Iratai [Documents of the National Archives] (hereinafter: OLI): 1879 – I – B – 89 (1879 – I – B – 2444), Document no. 2444, Subject no. 38607. (August 21, 1879), postscript no. 2485.

3 Issued in Budapest, August 13, 1879 under no. 2319. OLI: 1879 – I – B – 89.

4 OLI: 1879 – I – B – 89, Document no. 2319.

5 *Ibid.*

6 Received by the Royal Ministry of the Interior on August 21, 1879 under 38607.

7 OLI: 1879 – I – B – 89, PM's document no. 2444.

8 OLI: 1879 – I – B – 89, CC's document no. 38. The related abstract reads the following. The Prime Minister introduced the bill on the acquisition and loss of Hungarian citizenship to the

Cabinet Council; the Council approved the bill, and authorized the Prime Minister to put it forward in Parliament as assented by the King. In the absence of the Cabinet Council's notary, the document was signed by the Department Councilor.

9 From among these, the Minister emphasized the requirement of residence in the country for at least five years without interruption, as well as to have been registered in the tax registry of any township for at least the same period. OLI: 1879 – I – B – 89, 2485. I. B. document no. 89/2444.

10 A bill was also drafted to settle citizenship in the country of Croatia and Slavonia. Belügyminiszteri Általános Iratok [General Documents of Minister of the Interior] (hereinafter: Bm. Ált. Iratok) K 150 II. no. 48295.

11 Any exception to this regulation was regarded as justified by the Minister only if the aim was the acquisition of Austrian citizenship. OLI: 1879 – I – B – 89, 2485. I. B. document no. 89/2444.

12 *Ibid.*

13 *Ibid.* Appendices to the letter: the draft and justification of the bill on the acquisition and loss of Hungarian citizenship (2 copies), the draft of the supreme decision (1 copy).

14 Dated. Vienna, August 27, 1879. *Ibid.*

15 Károly P. Szathmáry, ed., *Az 1878. évi október 17-ére hirdetett országgyűlés képviselőházának naplója* [Journals of the House of Representatives of the Parliament Summoned to October 17, 1878] (hereinafter: Journals), vol. VII, (Budapest, 1879), 213.

16 Károly Kisteleki, *ibid., passim.*

17 For J. Péchy's speech, cf. *Ibid., Napló* [Journals], vol. VII, 268.

18 As concerning the special Hungarian nature, Jenő Péchy's speech argued for the legal continuity of the previous Hungarian practice, the principle of descent (*ius sanguinis*, the principle of kinship): "on the one hand, the bill will not immediately divest our homeland's citizen that has emigrated, and probably entered the ties of a foreign state from his citizenship; on the other hand, it will not give up the children of citizens that has inclined – partly owing to the conditions – towards foreign lands, and been perhaps forgetful of their homeland, and these children will be reclaimed by Hungary, just like any legitimate children of Hungarian citizens and illegitimate children of Hungarian women, as their homeland always hopes to reckon upon them with good reason, and regards them as Hungarian citizens, even if their place of birth is in a foreign land, because it is just the same; 'Eagles beget only eagles'. And Hungarian blood cannot deteriorate to affect the descendants; not other than Hungarian can part from the breasts of Hungarian mothers, no matter how northern fog or the searing southern sun hailed his coming to life." J. Péchy: *Ibid., Napló* [Journals], vol. VII, 269.

19 *Ibid., Napló* [Journals], vol. VII, 270–271. Contribution by Nándor Szederkényi.

20 "This bill was submitted on the 8th of this month, this year, but the government made the committee to debate it on the 18th, and in ten days, thus today has been presented to the House." *Ibid., Napló* [Journals], vol. VII, 270.

21 *Ibid., Napló* [Journals], vol. VII, 271.

22 Joined by eleven representatives, Nándor Szederkényi introduced his proposals to the House as a vote, requesting that the House of Representatives should recommit the bill to the Naturalization Committee with a view to the objections made by him "to amend, correct and reframe it in the future." The vote as proposed did not receive a majority. *Ibid., Napló* [Journals], Volume VII, 273.

23 *Képviselőházi irományok* [Documents of the House of Representatives] (hereinafter: K. i.) 1878–81, no. 338, 264.

24 *Ibid.,* K. i. no. 338, 264–266.

25 *Ibid.,* K. i. no. 338, 276.

26 *Ibid.,* K. i. no. 338, 277.

27 *Ibid.*, K. i. no. 338, 277.
28 *Ibid.*, K. i. no. 338, 277.
29 *Ibid.*, K. i. no. 338, 278.
30 *Ibid.*, K. i. no. 338, 278.
31 *Ibid.*, K. i. no. 338, 276–278.
32 *Idid.*, K. i. no. 371, 209.
33 *Ibid.*, K. i. no. 371, 210.
34 *Ibid.*, K. i. no. 371, 210.
35 *Ibid.*, *Napló* [Journals] vol. VII, 277. Speech by L. Mocsáry.
36 *Ibid.*, *Napló* [Journals] vol. VII, 277.
37 *Ibid.*, *Napló* [Journals] vol. VII, passim. Speech by Imre Veszter.
38 *Ibid.*, *Napló* [Journals] vol. VII, 290.
39 *Ibid.*, *Napló* [Journals] vol. VII, 290.
40 *Ibid.*, *Napló* [Journals] vol. VII, 292. Speech by Pál Hoffman.
41 *Ibid.*, *Napló* [Journals] vol. VII, 292.
42 *Ibid.*, *Napló* [Journals] vol. VII, 302–303.
43 "...in ten years under this Act who is to prevent every single person from faraway eastern lands from being a Hungarian citizen, representative and minister ...? It is required by the very existence of the nation that we have to offer the safeguard to the country that the majority of the legislature will always be constituted by natural born Hungarians, and no one may be involved only those who with respect to their merits have been made deserving by the legislature ..." *Ibid.*, *Napló* [Journals] vol. VII, 307, 309.
44 From among the 442 representatives being validly present, 105 voted yeas, 74 voted nays, while the others were absent. For that matter, this "under representation" was typical of the whole period, and the majority of representatives expressed their lack of concern for the issue by their absence.
45 When considering the speeches held throughout the debate, Dániel Irányi's contribution can be regarded as an outstanding one: "... I view it as impossible that this provision of Act 1868 shall be amended by the common Parliament. I view this right as impossible: impossible with respect to national dignity, and impossible for prudence. Law cannot allow a bilateral agreement to be withdrawn unilaterally. Law requires that a bilateral agreement be modified by common assent. Even national dignity, the chivalry of the nation cannot endure that what has been promised solemnly, may be recalled ... Ultimately, prudence cautions us, gentlemen, against offending those without a cause whose friendship may be highly precious to us, and whose hostile vein may hurt us." *Ibid.*, *Napló* [Journal], vol. VII, 324.
46 Márton Hegyessi's speech seems to be typical: "More than 40 years ago, István Széchenyi said that we were so few in number that even the parricide had to be given pardon – just not to let Hungarian people abate, yet we had the tendency to find artificial causes to diminish ourselves as we could." *Ibid.*, *Napló* [Journals], vol. VII, 365.
47 *Ibid.*, *Napló* [Journals], vol. VII, 370.
48 *Ibid.*, *Napló* [Journals], vol. VII, 376.
49 *Ibid.*, *Napló* [Journals], vol. VII, 377.
50 *Ibid.*, K. i. no. 383, 242.
51 *Ibid.*, K. i. no. 383, 243.
52 *Ibid.*, K. i. no. 383, 243.
53 *Ibid.*, K. i. no. 403, *passim*.
54 The related request was made by the Prime Minister in his summons no. 3392, dated December 6, 1879. OLI: K 26 – 1879 – II – 3498 (1879 – II – 203).
55 To read the full text see: OLI: K26 – 1879 – II – 3498 (1879 – II – 203).

56 Andor Csizmadia, "A magyar állampolgársági jog fejlődése" [The Development of Hungarian Citizenship Law] *Állam és Közigazgatás* (1969): 1083–1084; Károly Kisteleki, *ibid.*, 43–50; Károly Besnyő, ed., *A magyar állampolgárság (Megszerzése és elvesztése a gyakorlatban)* [Hungarian Citizenship (Its Acquisition and Loss in Practice)] (Budapest, 1982), 29–31, Károly P. Szathmáry, ed., *ibid.*, vol. VII, (Budapest, 1879), 213, 246, 268–286, 290–337, 339–402; Károly P. Szathmáry, ed., *Az 1878. évi október 17-ére hirdetett országgyűlés képviselőházának naplója* [Journals of the House of Representatives of the Parliament summoned for 17 October 1878], vol. VIII (Budapest, 1879), 111, 248; *Ibid.*, 1880, vol. IX, 226. As concerning the debate on the citizenship law, further guidance can be found in the proceedings of the House of Representatives: *Az 1878. évi október hó 17-re hirdetett országgyűlés képviselőházának jegyzőkönyve* [Proceedings of the House of Representatives of the Parliament summoned for 17 October 1878] volume II (Budapest, 1879), 17, 21, 24–29, 35, 40–62, 77–78, 93, 101–102, 153; Hugó Maszák, ed., *Az 1879. évi október 17-re hirdetett országgyűlés főrendi házának naplója* [Journals of the Upper House of the Parliament summoned for 17 October 1878] vol. I (Budapest, 1880), 303, 310–312, 317, 370. The text and justification of the act passed can be found in the National Archives under no. 2387/1879. K 26 – 1879 – II – 3498 (1879 – II – 203).

57 Hugó Maszák, ed., *Az 1879. évi október 17-re hirdetett országgyűlés főrendi házának naplója* [Journals of the Upper House of the Parliament summoned for 17 October 1878] vol. I (Budapest, 1880), 303, 310–312, 317, 370.

58 Ferenc Ferenczy, *Magyar állampolgársági jog* [Hungarian citizenship law] (Gyoma, 1930), 57; Emanuel Milner: *Studien zum Österreichischen Staatsrechte I. Die Österreichische Staatsbürgerschaft und der Gesetzartikel L: 1879 über den Erwerb und Verlust der Ungarischen Staatsbürgerschaft.* (Tübingen, 1880), 47–48; According to the Civil Code of 1811, Austrian citizenship could be acquired by way of marriage, legitimization, descent, naturalization, and entering civil service. The last case was a debated one, since the above mentioned law also declared that only Austrian citizens could undertake public office. Olivér Eöttevényi Nagy, *Osztrák közjog* [Austrian public law] (Budapest. 1913), 46–47; Andor Csizmadia, *ibid.*, 1084–1085; Géjza Ferdinándy, *Magyarország közjoga (Alkotmányjog)* [Public law of Hungary (Constitutional law)] (Budapest, 1902), 238; Gusztáv Ladik, *Közigazgatásunk fejlődése 1867. óta* [The development of Hungarian public administration since 1867] (Budapest, 1933), 11. Imre Zlinszky, *A magyar magánjog mai érvényben különös tekintettel a gyakorlat igényére* [Hungarian private law in effect today, with special attention to the demands of practice] (Budapest, 1894), 50–51; Jenő Pongrácz, *Magyar állampolgárság és községi illetőség. Törvények, rendeletek, elvi határozatok, díjak és illetékek, magyarázat, iratminták* [Hungarian citizenship and township residence. Laws, decrees, principle decisions, fees and dues, explanation, sample documents] (Budapest, 1938), *passim.*

59 We must also note, however, that the law nevertheless also contained some methods of acquisition of citizenship, which were not mentioned in Section 3 of Act 50 of 1879. These were the following: the "right of land" *(jus soli)* and favored re-naturalization. Ferenc Ferenczy,: *ibid.*, 57, Act 50 of 1879, Section 19, 38–44.

60 Sándor Berényi, Nándor Tarján, *A magyar állampolgárság megszerzése és elvesztése (honosság, letelepülés, kivándorlás, útlevélügy). Az 1879. évi L. törvény-czikk és az ezzel kapcsolatos törvények s rendeletek gyűjteménye és magyarázata* [The acquisition and loss of Hungarian citizenship (national status, settling, emigration, passport regulations). A collection and explanation of Act 50 of 1879, as well as related laws and regulations] (Budapest, 1905), 14; Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 57.

61 Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 58.

62 Zlinszky, *ibid.*, 50–51.

63 *Ibid.*, 51.

64 In case of birth it is the transfer of an old right and not the obtaining of a new one, which proves that the child is not an acquirer of rights, only the inheritor of an already existing right. Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 58.

65 The practical implementation of the law, however, raised a number of issues with regard to which several supplementary regulations had to be issued by the competent ministries. Decree of the Minister of the Interior no. 24.553/1888. in.: Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 153.

66 Ferdinándy, *ibid.*, 238–239; Arthur Balogh, *Politikai Jegyzetek* [Political notes] (Budapest, 1905), 91; Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 31.

67 Imre Korbuly, *Magyarország közjoga illetőleg a magyar államjog rendszere* [Hungarian public law and the system of Hungarian state law] (Budapest, 1884), 138; Kisteleki, *ibid.*, 50; Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 31–32.

68 Ministry of the Interior official communication no. 33.325/1888; in: Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 156.

69 Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 32.

70 *Ibid.*, 32; Ministry of the Interior Decree no. 20.723/1896 in: *Ibid.*, 175.

71 Korbuly, *ibid.*, 140; Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 34.

72 Korbuly, *ibid.*, 140; Nagy, *ibid.*, 109.

73 Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 34–35; Ministry of the Interior Decree no. 20.723/1869 in: *Ibid.*, 175.

74 Ferdinándy, *ibid.*, 239. The original Hungarian expression "férjhez megy" can only be applied to women. The author maintains that, apart from being more genuinely Hungarian, this expression better expresses the fact that only a woman was able to acquire Hungarian citizenship this way.

75 *Ibid.*, 239.

76 Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 86; József Tar, *Állampolgárság* [Citizenship] (Debrecen, 1941), 25.

77 Berényi, Tarján, *ibid.*, 109–111.

78 Géjza Ferdinándy on the other hand, used the expression "honfiúsítás" together with "honosítás." Ferdinándy, *ibid.*, 238–239.

79 Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 35. Date of coming into force: January 5, 1880.

80 The provision was in effect in Hungary whereby if an Austrian citizen immigrated to Hungary in the 1840s or 1850s, then he could obtain Hungarian citizenship by way of simple naturalization. In case of returning to his original country, however, this acquired right was lost. The royal decree no. 10.661 of 1814 was applied whereby citizenship could be acquired implicitly by uninterrupted and proved residence in the country for ten years. Ministry of the Interior registry no. 553/1887 in.: Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 153–154. The same is set forth in Ministry of the Interior Decree no. 2194/1886. in: *Ibid.*, 155.

81 Arthur Balogh differentiated between them on the basis of the legal consequences effected by naturalization, and accordingly differentiated between naturalization of smaller and larger legal effect, similarly to Belgians. Balogh, *ibid.*, 91–92.

82 Ministry of the Interior decree no. 115.702/1904 in: Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 167. The connection between naturalization and township residence is further regulated by Ministry of the Interior decree no. 8497/1905 in: Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 167–168.

83 Korbuly, *ibid.*, 139; Ministry of the Interior executive decree no. 584/1880 in: Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 163. According to the Austrian Civil Code of 1811, the following conditions had to be met for naturalization: legal capacity, no criminal record, proof of income, admittance to a township either concluded or in progress. Naturalization belonged to the competence of provincial authorities with the Minister of the Interior intervening in cases of disputed issues only. A certificate of the naturalization was issued, and an oath had to be taken. Minors were either exempted from under the oath, or it was postponed until they would come of age. Eöttevényi, *ibid.*, 47.

84 Such regulation also appears in the citizenship law of the United States of America, which causes problems more than once in naturalization cases. In.: Katalin Gönczi, *A magyarok az amerikai Legfelsőbb Bíróság előtt* [Hungarians before the Supreme Court] (Budapest, 2000), 46–51; Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 59–60.

85 Official communication of the Ministry of Justice no. 26.538/1904 in: Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 164–165.

86 Ministry of the Interior Resolution no. 3257/1886 in: Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 159–160. If their conjugal life was subsequently restored, then the husband's citizenship was also extended to his wife. Official communication of the Ministry of Justice no. 52.280/1900 in: Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 160–162.

87 József Kun, *Nép, nemzet, nemzetiség* [People, nation, nationality] (Budapest, 1908), 174–175; Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 61.

88 Ministry of Finance Decree no. 44.130/1881 in: Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 168–169.

89 Balogh, *ibid.*, 91.

90 Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 62.

91 Ministry of the Interior Decree no. 584/1880 in: Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 172; Ministry of the Interior Decree no. 29.212/1895 in: *Ibid.*, 174.

92 Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 63.

93 Ferdinándy, *ibid.*, 242.

94 Ernő Nagy, *ibid.*, 111; Edit Madari and Maria Parragi, The New Act on Hungarian Nationality. *Acta Juridica Hungarica* (1993), 68; József Hargitai, A magyar állampolgársági jog de lege lata (gondolatok néhány alapelvről) [Hungarian citizenship law *de lege lata* (thoughts on some basic principles)]. *Magyar Jog* (1993) 721.

95 65.268/1888. Ministry of the Interior official communication in: Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 170.

96 A certificate of Hungarian citizenship could also only be issued by the Hungarian Royal Minister of the Interior. Ministry of the Interior Decree no. 24.565/1887 in: Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 152. This was also underlined by the Ministry of the Interior's general decree no 45.516 of 1878 stating that county, municipal and township authorities did not have the powers to issue such certificates in: *Ibid.*, 152.

97 Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 64.

98 Act 50 of 1879, Section 14. Ministry of the Interior Decree no. 584/1880 regulates the records to be made at the taking of the oath, in.: Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 172–173.

99 Korbuly, *ibid.*, 140; Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 65, 174.

100 Ferdinándy, *ibid.*, 239–242; Ernő Nagy, *ibid.*, 111–112.

101 Ernő Nagy, *ibid.*, 110. A similar agreement was also in place between Hungary and Serbia (Act 30 of 1882).

102 Ferenc Ferenczy argues that the word "re-naturalization" is not appropriate, since the person involved is not "regaining some old, lost right," but is acquiring a new right. "Citizenship by way of so-called re-naturalization is not *restitutio in integrum*, but a new citizen's right." He saw this reasoning justified by the taking of the oath and other, similar procedural rules. Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 66; Pongrácz, *ibid.*, 28–29.

103 Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 65.

104 *Ibid.*, 66.

105 A child otherwise of legal age could not obtain citizenship by the right of his or her father. Ministry of the Interior Decree no. 1556/1887 in: Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 157; Pongrácz, *ibid.*, 30–31.

106 Such certificates had no temporal restrictions; however, if a person lost his or her citizenship due to ten years' of absence, then the certificate itself also became ineffective. It was considered as an authentic proof of citizenship until proved otherwise. Ministry of the Interior official communication no. 44.451/1900 in: Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 152.

107 Pongrácz, *ibid.*, 31–32; Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 67.

108 Ernő Nagy, *ibid.*, 116.

109 Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 68.

110 The law made it possible for the Csángó [Hungarian-speaking native of Moldavia] Hungarians of Bukovina to re-settle in large numbers, "and was brought to existence by the recognition that these otherwise lost Hungarians should be saved for the Hungarian nation, and should be given every concession to facilitate their return. It is not impossible that this law will make good services in the future as well." Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 68–69; Ernő Nagy, *ibid.*, 116; Pongrácz, *ibid.*, 32.

111 Korbuly, *ibid.*, 138; Kisteleki, *ibid.*, 50; Ministry of the Interior Decree no. 23.319/1903. in: Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 158; Ernő Nagy, *ibid.*, 109.

112 Ministry of the Interior official communication no. 52.550/1903, Ministry of the Interior Decree no. 27.899/1904. in.: Ferenczy, *ibid.*, 158–159.

113 Ferdinándy, *ibid.*, 239.

IMAGE VERSUS IDENTITY: ASSIMILATION AND DISCRIMINATION OF HUNGARY'S JEWRY

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The contradictory process and the ambivalent result of Jewish assimilation in Hungary between 1867 and 1944 were shaped both by the Neolog-Orthodox duality and the fast acculturation of the Neolog Jewry. The image persistently attached to the Jew in Hungary, the basis of any sort of anti-Semitism, was the denominational bound Jewishness; the identity created and sustained mainly by the urban Neolog Jewish bourgeoisie was, however, definitely Magyar. When image and identity came to be confronted with each other, then political anti-Semitism could get a firm footing; this had happened from just around the late nineteenth and especially the beginning of the twentieth century. Still, there is more than simply a continuity between the form of anti-Semitism characterizing the age of Dualism and the one accompanying the interwar period, when it even became a state policy. The former was rooted in the mental construction of a cultural code, while the latter was most closely associated with the cognitive construction of political code. This also meant that while the former was exclusively carried by some social movements hostile to the issue of Jewish assimilation, the latter led to rigid state discrimination applied against all those the image of whom was identified with Jewishness.

Keywords: of Jewish origin, acculturation, structural assimilation, postmodern notion of identity, co-constitutionality, cultural code, ethnic nationalism, political code

"Well: I was trained as Magyar. I firmly believed that my confession is only Jewish, but I am ethnic Magyar. Since, however, I am not a faithful Israelite, I have no community with the Jewry. Then I became cosmopolitan at the university. All this was a mistake and lie!"[1] The kind of mixed identity thus expressed by Aladár Komlós in 1921 characterized many Hungarian Jews at around the beginning of the twentieth century. Before the mid-nineteenth century, however, the label Jew simply meant that someone belonged to the Israelite denomination. In the aftermath of Jewish emancipation this changed fundamentally. Although few converted and/or contracted a mixed marriage (which also demanded apostasy prior to 1895),[2] after 1868 the label 'Jewish' was applied not only to the members of the

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Israelite denomination. Since it might even have happened that an individual was born into a Jewish family, was baptized as an infant or a child, received a Christian (Catholic or Protestant) education, and he or she was not even aware of his/her Jewish origin. This is the reason why historians prefer to use the term, *of Jewish origin* instead of the word, Jew.[3]

But that is not the whole story. Following 1868, due to the split of the Israelite Church into Neolog and Orthodox (and even *status quo ante*) parishes, adherence to the Israelite Church came less and less to express the real self-consciousness of an incessantly growing number of Hungarian Jews. Social history studies have clearly demonstrated the great difference between a Neolog and an Orthodox Jew, both in their social advance and their degree of assimilation. As opposed to the urban Neologs, Orthodox Jews, who made up about half of Jewry around 1910, showed little or no evidence of embourgeoisement, modernity, economic and intellectual innovation. There is hardly any doubt that in itself Jewish religious status did not invest Jewry with a "special group susceptibility", which caused the development of an "achievement ethics and work morale rare in Hungary" – as Karády regularly holds.[4]

As regards ethnicity, especially if we use the criterion of mother tongue, a major part of the Jews (with the exception of some Orthodox elements) has succesfully been assimilated into the Hungarian nation. Still, in spite of their rapid and massive cultural assimilation (acculturation), the Jews as a whole still retained some sort of otherness well into the twentieth century. The resurgent political anti-Semitism of the post-war years occasionally defined it as racial separation, and tied it at the beginning (in the 1920s) to denominational criteria; later, especially after 1941, at the time of the anti-Jewish laws, it kept track of the Jews by heredity, in line with the Nazi notion of race. The ethnic difference of the Jews cannot signify that they constitute a national minority;[5] they were never given such status, and they never claimed it. Moreover, the Jews cannot be described as a group with an unassimilated language. There was only one reason why they preserved some of their distinct status in the interwar period; namely that they were victims of pronounced political and social discrimination.

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What then is the reason for the uninterrupted anti-Semitism in spite of the many apparent signs of a successful integration of the Jews? (Integration is meant here as assimilation since along the norms dictating the building of nation-states in the "long nineteenth century", integration has not yet gained ground in a fuller sense.) One possible reason could be what Saul Friedländer has also stressed in his book on German anti-Semitism that although anti-Semitism always implies a pre-exist-

ing hostile attitude or disposition, still the Jews in spite all of their efforts remain a distinct group as being easily or more or less recognizable by the most various criteria.[6]

This can also be justified in Hungary's case. Karády's statistically based research findings have abundantly demonstrated that after acculturation, Magyarization of names, rather than religious conversion, was the method most generally chosen for a shift of identity. It indicates that the more loosely a given attribute was linked to denominational identity, the easier it was to break away from it in the interests of adaptation. Hence, following only slight initial resistance, very large numbers of those assimilating gave up Yiddish, and, as a second step, changed their names.

Thus little evidence seems to support the thesis of overfulfilling the assimilation norm, a doctrine advanced by several scholars (including Karády).[7] As has already been mentioned, Jewishness based on identification with a particular confessional status, does not represent the authentic (Jewish) identity. Milton M. Gordon called marital assimilation (the mixed- or intermarriage) as "keystone of the arch of assimilation".[8] In applying the notion of "inter-confessional" mixed marriage not exclusively to the ones contracted between the Jews and the Christians, but even to those contracted among the Jews themselves, it can be discerned that the more the Neologs were assimilated, the more the Orthodox Jews were ready to separate themselves from the "sinners of Israel" as they called their Jewish counterparts. Quantitative evidence is now available to show the infrequency of such "intermarriages" between Neolog and Orthodox Jews. The separation observed in that regard was so extreme that, as Jakov Katz has contended, in the life of the third generation, born in the 1900s, "the Neolog and Orthodox Jews functioned even as two distinct social entities".[9]

Successful integration on the one side was thus plainly opposed by the increasing mutual alienation among the Jews on the other side. The process discussed finally led to two important consequences. First, the Jews who persistently insisted on their traditionally defined religious identity, met several insurmountable barriers in their assimilation, if willing at all to be assimilated. This went hand in hand with their unfavourable social status and immobility. Most of them lived in villages, pursued lower paid occupations not carrying high prestige, and in consequence remained more or less strangers in their own local communities, which were dominated mainly by agrarian populations.

As a piece of evidence one may cite the observation of an anthropologist, who has described the relationships between the Jews and the peasants in a Transdanubian village.

> The Jewry of Aba, by virtue of his ethnic and economic character, differed from the rural society. Notwithstanding the fact that the Jews were already emancipated due to the intense symbolic contacts held

> in everyday life, not even their two hundred-year presence in the local community resulted in a complete identification in the values and the way of life, not yet with the bourgeois stratum. In terms of the latter, they remained a caste, and as such were prevented from amalgamation by religious taboos. These sanctions, chiefly the religious endogamy made impossible for the Christians, first of all the peasants (who wanted more to approach the Jews) to accommodate them unconditionally.[10]

Second, not only assimilation, but even internal Jewish integrity was at the stake in this process. Social stratification played a great role in choosing this or that path even including several Orthodox Jews. A representative of the latter recalls from the interwar Szombathely the following way: "many refused to come to my Bar Micva holiday since I was pupil of a lay school *(polgári iskola)*. It was forgiven for the rich Eiland children that they studied at the grammar school *(gimnázium),* but not for me, the poor".[11]

The true identity of many Jewish people can only be discerned by microscopic investigation of daily social practice. So it is no wonder that everyday perception and particularly the anti-Semitic representation of the other took mostly into account not the individual identity but the group image inherited from the not too distant past. This, in addition, was further supported by some evident social facts.

> The social indicators of modernity – Karády also admits – clearly divide Hungarian Jewry into two major sectors, which broadly correspond to the Orthodox-Neolog division. Still, the main conclusion of this investigation ... should stress the importance of secondary divisions cutting across the Neolog-Orthodox divide.[12]

The secondary-division, or more plainly, the still existing Jewish unity also manifested itself, to cite one example only, in the discourse on philanthropy and altruism. Both the Neolog and the Orthodox discourse aimed to establish an intrinsic connection between charity and the authentic Jewish "soul", by interpreting philanthropy as one to come from true generosity rather than social obligation only. True, however, that the Neologs alone were to emphasize the inter-denominational character of Jewish charity to counter the blames of an uninterrupted "Jewish solidarity".[13] And this was even a real practice as evidenced by the average case of the legacy of Izsák Tafler, a wealthy Budapest wholesale merchant and house-holder, who died in 1891. Tafler, to match the expectations known in the Israelite Church, allotted a large sum to charitable ends; apart from the money provided for some poor members of his family, forty per cent of the sum went to the poor of Budapest (without any denominational specification) and fifty-six per cent was given to various Jewish institutions (hospital and the Chevra Cadisha).[14]

Assimilation shaped by these and the similarly contradictory circumstances, also covered the growing divergence between the identity of many Jews and the

widely held image usually attached to Jewishness. This resulted in an ambivalent mental state of all those who were deeply involved in the assimilation process. That is the reason why one may question any "essentializing" understanding of contemporary Jewishness. The obvious temptation to adopt an essentialist view is based on two reasons. First, it has a lot to do with the essentialist thinking, which unanimously dominated the minds of contemporaries. They in their "drive to uniformity" tended to fully match the expectations that they were exposed to in the course of nation-state building. So, it is not wholly an accident that due to "the increasing power of the discourse [of that kind], Jews too, willy-nilly, became enmeshed in its logic, forced to conduct the dialogue within this essentialist framework".[15] In truth, Aladár Komlós, who publicly confessed his double commitment and flexible identity was more of an exception than a rule.[16]

Second, the historical sources historians are regularly working with, notably statistics (census data in particular) strongly suggest or even prescribe the essentializing reduction of Jewish identity. This is because statistics are an inevitable part of the national discourse aiming at furthering homogenization rather than reflecting the growing fragmentation and diversity of group self-consciousness.[17]

I am ready to break away from this essentialist notion of historical Jewry, a doctrine which also took the form of historicist integrationism (an approach that was aptly criticized by András Gerő some years ago).[18] Instead, I would adopt the co-constitutive approach in terms both of assimilation and nationalism. "Co-constitutionality" means that group identities are not seen as fixed social entities, but "as negotiated constructions in which, at critical points, the role of the Jews (whether or not identified as such) is conceived not simply as contributory but well-nigh *co-constitutive.*" Accepting the position that Steven E. Aschheim takes on the issue, I would also emphasize the fact that such complex cultures and identities like the Jewish one to be found in Hungary at that time are always contextually and interactively constructed.[19]

The conceptual framework advocated here makes the distinction between identity and image an important issue. The much quoted facts or events like (1) the sharpening competition of professionals in the labour market, or (2) the large influence exerted by the new Galician immigration during the war, or (3) the negative repercussion of the swift emergence of war millionaires (with many Jews among them), and (4) the drastic change concerning the political elite during the late 1910s (in 1918 and in 1919) seem not to explain in themselves the resurgent tide of extreme anti-Semitism following through the Dual Monarchy. The problem of how the mechanism of modern political anti-Semitic sentiment actually worked could most easily be approached through the example of 1918 and especially 1919, the memory of which became one of the reference points of Jewish discrimination policy and ideology in the interwar period.

The important role the Jews played in the events of the two revolutions, more closely, their over representation in the elites of both the Republic of 1918 and in that of the Commune of 1919 in particular, was an effective and durable vehicle for the state supported political anti-Semitism in the Horthy regime. I may cite the following paradigmatic case. When a delegation of the Alliance (a Jewish organization) visited the "completely liberal aristocrat" Count Khuen-Héderváry, ambassador of Hungary in Paris, to consult about the first anti-Jewish law passed in 1938, Khuen-Héderváry stated that the enmity Hungarians obviously felt to the Jews in Hungary rooted in the permanent "memory of Béla Kun's and his Jewish comissars".[20]

The vital issue arising at that point concerns the exact nature of the relationship between identity and image in terms of the left-wing intellectuals and short-lived politicians, who have always been blamed for their alleged Jewishness. As regarding Béla Kun (and his comrades) there seems to be a widely shared consensus among historians that he did not give the least manifest sign of a distinct Jewish consciousness.[21] And this behavior appears to be wholly in accordance with his family socialization. Kun's father was a village notary, who later worked as clerical worker in Kolozsvár. In addition, Béla Kun was pupil of the well-known Kolozsvár Protestant College and was in his youth filled with some sense of national patriotism. Due to the close and continuous commitment to the working class movement thereafter, he also became immunized from any direct influence of Jewishness, which would have been mediated mainly by the Israelite religion and church.[22]

Or an other case in point is Oscar Jászi, a prominent politician of the Károlyi government in 1918 and one of the leaders of the radical democrats of the early twentieth century. Jászi was also branded in the interwar period as representative of a specific Jewish spirit. As opposed to this judgement, György Litván argues in his recently published Jászi biography, "Similarly to many other assimilationists and Christianized Jewish contemporaries of him [Jászi was baptized even as a child] he also grew up and behaved in a manner for long as if he would have been born a Calvinist Magyar. Calvinism meant for him more a habitus than a religion, as he had never had a close link to the latter; and apart from his free thinking youth, he always retained a faith in God until he died."[23] And this is justified even by Jászi's well-known critical attitude both towards the assimilationist Jews and figures such as Béla Kun, an issue that has frequently been discussed by historians.[24]

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We can conclude that the image-making process plays a far more important role in shaping anti-Semitic perception than does the sense of identity, since the

latter due to the circumstances of *co-constitutionality* seems not to be able to produce sharp group contours and easily identifiable social meaning. This is the starting point for a postmodern notion of identity proposed here.[25] If we look closely at the incessantly changing role that identity and image have fulfilled in the various societal processes, the doctrine assuming continuity in the development of modern political anti-Semitism from the late nineteenth century on, cannot be accepted at face value. Shulamit Volkov is right in asserting that the anti-Semitism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has no close tie to such later developments as the Nazi type anti-Semitic ideology and politics.[26] A rigorously contextual approach is advocated by her with the aim to have a much better understanding of the peculiar nature of twentieth-century anti-Semitism. Volkov has also stated that the pre-1914 German anti-Semitism and the Nazi one was linked together only through the mental construction of a *cultural code*. It signifies that everybody belongs to one particular cultural camp or universe. The *cognitive process* expressed by this term provides the most fertile basis for the precise assessment of the kind of anti-Semitic ideology and political practice resulting in the Final Solution. However, the old anti-Semitic political parties, movements and social associations cannot be seen as merely anticipating the Nazi type anti-Semitism.[27]

The problem is also familiar in Hungary. Miklós Szabó who pioneered such scholarship in applying the term "neo-conservatism" to identify the social bases and the ideological content of pre-fascist tendencies of the turn of the century, also suggested a very similar continuity between various forms of anti-Semitisms.[28] In reconstructing the social movements (taking the form of social associations), which could mobilize large segments of the state and administrative salaried classes, the so called Christian middle class, Szabó postulated close relationship between the pre-1918 anti-Semitic movements (their organizations) and the ones appearing after the collapse of the Commune in the process of establishing the counter-revolutionary regime.[29]

There is no room for an exhausting critique of this argument. Instead, I want to return for a moment first to Volkov's concept of pre-Nazi anti-Semitism, and second to the paradigm of the scapegoat seeking political anti-Semitism already mentioned in connection with Béla Kun and Oscar Jászi. The function of the turn-of-the-century anti-Semitism fed by a cultural code was plainly to negate even the mere possibility of Jewish emancipation (and assimilation) as declaring the absolute Jewish *cultural alienness*, one which cannot be eliminated. The preoccupation with the essentialist understanding of the Jew in that case was entirely tailored to the traditional image of immigrant Jewry. This special sort of perception of the Jew, however, failed then to dictate the (also essentialist) nationalist discourse amidst the co-constitutionality so much characterizing the age of emancipation and assimilation.

The case suddenly changed during the late 1910s and especially following 1918 and 1919. Anti-Semitism from that time on started to play a key role in the nationalist discourse due in part to the expansion of *ethnic nationalism* influencing the whole of Europe (not exclusively Central-Europe) at that time.[30] The specific contribution of Central Europe to the creation of a new form of anti-Semitism was to fill the Jewish image with a clear-cut political content. It "turned out" that the Jew, who up to this point was viewed only as a culturally alien element, might even mean a political "threat" to the host society. This was the most important message of 1918 and 1919 in the eyes of all those who were frightened by the events.[31] It is true that the language adopted by interwar anti-Semitism, retained some links with the pre-existing forms of hating Jews. However, more radical manifestations and entirely new meanings were then added to the traditionally known political anti-Semitism. These in taking the form of a *political code* were able in themselves to justify the anti-Jewish discrimination policy, which showed total neglect or even insensitivity to the authentic (although ambivalent) identity of many Jews. The great force of the new sense then attributed to nationalism and the irony hidden at the depth of the tragic story of Hungary's Jewry have clearly been evidenced by the fact that the most obvious (and irreversible) divergence between identity and image happened at a moment when the most assimilated and the least Jewish Jews lived in Hungary, namely in the period after Trianon.

Notes

1. Aladár Komlós, "Zsidók válaszúton (1921)" [Jews at the crossroads (1921)], in *A zsidóság útja* [The Road of the Jewry], ed. Kőbányai, János (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő Kiadó, 2000), 168.
2. Viktor Karády, "Asszimiláció és társadalmi krízis" [Assimilation and social crises] in *Zsidóság, modernizáció, polgárosodás. Tanulmányok* [Jewry, Modernization, Embourgeoisement. Studies], by Viktor Karády (Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1997), 132–150.
3. Tibor Erényi, *A zsidók története Magyarországon a honfoglalástól napjainkig* [History of the Jews in Hungary from the conquest until recent times] (Budapest, n.d.), 50–51.
4. Viktor Karády, "A zsidóság polgárosodásának és modernizációjának főbb tényezői a magyar társadalomtörténetben" [Main factors of Jewish embourgeoisement and modernization in Hungarian social history] in Karády, *op. cit.*, 91.
5. This argument goes against Erényi's contention according to which the Jews were not only a religion but also a specific ethnic group constituting a part of the Hungarians. Erényi, *op. cit.*, 71.
6. Saul Friedländer, *A náci antiszemitizmus. Egy tömegpszichózis története* (Budapest: Uránusz, 1996), 23. (Original French edition: L'antisémitisme Nazi. Histoire d'une Psychose Collective) (Paris, 1972).
7. The thesis was advanced again and again by Viktor Karády.
8. Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life. The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 80–81.

[9] Jakov Katz, *Végzetes szakadás. Az ortodoxia kiválása a zsidó hitközségekbol Magyarországon és Németországban* [Disastrous Schism. The Secession of Orthodoxy from the Jewish Parishes in Hungary and Germany] (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő Kiadó, 1990, 303. On the several difficulties (and familial tensions) caused by leaving the Orthodox parish for the sake of Neolog one see, Gábor Gyáni: *"Middle class kinship in nineteenth-century Hungary". Forthcoming.*

[10] Michael Sozan, "Zsidók egy dunántúli falu közösségében" [Jews in the Community of a Transdanubian Village] in ... *és hol a vidék zsidósága?...* [... And Where is the Jewry of the Countryside?...] eds Zita Deáky, Zsigmond Csoma and Éva Vörös (Budapest: Centrál Európa, 1994), 166.

[11] Edit Balázs and Attila Katona, eds, *Baljós a menny felettem. Vallomások a szombathelyi zsidóságról és a soáról* [Ominous is the Heaven Above Me. Confessions on the Jews of Szombathely and the Soah] (Szombathely, 2001), 135.

[12] Victor Karady, "Religious divisions, socio-economic stratification and the modernization of Hungarian Jewry after the emancipation" in *Jews in the Hungarian Economy*, ed. Michael K. Silber (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1992), 176.

[13] Miklós Konrád, "Zsidó jótékonyság és asszimiláció a századfordulón" [Jewish charity and assimilation at the turn of the twentieth century], *Történelmi Szemle* XLIII, 3–4 (2001): 257–287.

[14] Budapest Főváros Levéltára (Budapest Capital Archive) IV 1411 b. Legacy of Izsák Tafler, 1891.

[15] Steven E. Aschheim, *In Times of Crisis. Essays on European Culture, Germans, and Jews* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 91.

[16] The metaphor he applies is the following. True that the national sentiment felt by the Jews is merely a surface, but: "If Hungarianness of us is a skin only (Hungarian language, Hungarian education, more attraction and interest to the field and all the thing attached to the Hungarians), man does not give up his skin very easily and it is impossible to cast it quickly both for moral and technical reasons." Komlós, *op. cit.,* 182.

[17] Viktor Karády, the main proponent and practitioner of this essentializing approach in Hungary uses statistics only in his own research. Cf. Victor Karády, "Social mobility, reproduction and qualitative schooling differentials in ancient regime Hungary" in *CEU History Department Yearbook 1994–1995,* ed. Andrea Pető (Budapest: CEU, 1995), 133–157; *Idem,* "Aspects of unequal assimilation in liberal Hungary. Social geography of the movement to Magyarise alien surnames before 1918," in *CEU History Department Yearbook 1997–1998,* ed. Eszter Andor et al. (Budapest: CEU, 1999), 49–69; *Idem,* "Jewish over-schooling revisited: The case of Hungarian secondary education under the Old Regime (1900–1941)" in *Jewish Studies at the Central European University,* ed. András Kovács (Budapest: CEU, 2000), 71–89.

[18] András Gerő, "New Jewish past", in Andor, *op. cit.* 35–49. The book he reviewed was edited and in part written by Géza Komoróczy.

[19] Aschheim, *op. cit.* 87.

[20] The source cited is to be found in Nathaniel Katzburg, *Zsidópolitika Magyarországon 1919–1943* (Budapest: Bábel Kiadó, 2002), 245. (The original edition: *Hungary and the Jews 1920–1943.* Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1981.)

[21] *Ibid.,* 31–36; Erényi, *op. cit.* 63–66; William O. McCagg, "Jews in the revolutions. The Hungarian Experience", *Journal of Social History* 28 (1972): 78–105; György Borsányi, "Zsidók a munkásmozgalomban" [Jews and the workers' movement in Hungary] *Világosság* XXXIII, 2 (1992): 145–152; Tibor Erényi, "Zsidók és a magyar baloldaliság" [The Hungarian Left and the Jews], *Világosság* XXXIII, 2 (1992): 152–160.

[22] Cf. Kun Béláné, *Kun Béla (Emlékezések)* [Béla Kun (Recollections)] (Budapest: Magvető, 1969), 7–20.

[23] György Litván, *Jászi Oszkár* [Oscar Jászi] (Budapest: Osiris, 2003), 19.

24 See Walter Pietsch, *Reform és ortodoxia. A magyar zsidóság belépése a modern világba* [Reform and Orthodoxy. Admittance of Hungarian Jewry in the modern world] (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő Kiadó, 1999), 99–109; János Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon. Politikai eszmetörténet* [The Jewish Question in Hungary. A History of Political Ideas] (Budapest: Osiris, 2001), 495–509.

25 For more about this see Márta Csabai and Ferenc Erős, *Testhatárok és énhatárok. Az identitás változó keretei* [Body Borders and Self Borders. The Changing Frameworks of Identity] (Budapest: Jószöveg, 2000), 50.

26 Shulamit Volkov, "The written matter and the spoken word. On the gap between pre-1914 and Nazi anti-Semitism," in *Unanswered Questions. The Nazi Germany and the Genocide of Jews*, ed. Francois Furet (New York: Schocken Books, 1989), 33–55.

27 Shulamit Volkov, "Anti-Semitism as a Cultural Code. Reflections on the History and Historiography of anti-Semitism in Imperial Germany," in *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, XXIII (1978): 25–45.

28 Miklós Szabó, *Az újkonzervativizmus és a jobboldali radikalizmus története (1867–1918)* [The Neo-Conservativism and the History of Right-Wing Radicalism, 1867–1918] (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 2003.)

29 Miklós Szabó, "A 'magyar girondistáktól' az ébredő magyarokig. Az 1919-es ellenforradalmi kurzus előtörténetéből" [From the 'Hungarian girondists' to the awakening Hungarians. From the pre-history of the counterrevolutionary regime of 1919], *Világosság* 17, 3 (1976): 151–161; *Idem,* "Vázlat az antiszemitizmusról" [An outline of anti-Semitism], *Mozgó Világ* 21, 8 (1995): 3–11.

30 E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780. Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 102–109.

31 The social psychological concept, *threatened identity* is described by Ferenc Erős, *Az identitás labirintusai* [Labyrinths of Identity] (Budapest: Janus/Osiris, 2001), 74–78.

"ÁRPÁD AND ABRAHAM WERE FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN"

AN OUTLINE OF JEWISH LITERATURE IN HUNGARY

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The earliest Jewish literary works in Hungary were late-medieval religious writings in Hebrew, and literary contributions in the Hungarian language only began to appear toward the middle of the 19th century. The first generation of Hungarian-Jewish writers firmly believed in the viability of a dual Hungarian and Jewish identity and in the prospects of Jewish and Hungarian coexistence, and these two concerns have remained central to Hungarian-Jewish literature ever since. Jewish emancipation was warmly supported by the intellectual and political elite of Hungary, and Jewish Hungarians gained full civil rights in 1867. However, to their bitter disappointment, they were soon facing a rapidly rising tide of anti-Semitism that ultimately led to the Hungarian Holocaust, in which over half a million Jewish Hungarians perished. Some Hungarian-Jewish writers responded to the rising tide of anti-Semitism with a classical dual identity position that censured assimilation involving a denial of Jewish identity, others responded by attempting to deliberately shed their own Jewish identities through conversion to Christianity or by becoming Communists, a handful of others by opting for Zionism, and in one controversial instance, by advocating the adoption of an ethno-national minority identity. After the Holocaust, many among the remnant Jewish Hungarians believed that Communism would help resolve the core existential questions facing them, but the studious silence of the totalitarian regime about the Holocaust merely left these sores festering in an unresolved limbo for decades. Curiously, the regime eventually did permit the publication of *Fateless* by Kertész, undoubtedly because of its anti-Nazi message, and quite missing the irony that its resolute anti-totalitarianism applied equally to them. During the 75 years between Emancipation and Holocaust, the magnitude of Jewish contributions to Hungary's literature, journalism, scholarship, culture, science, industry, banking and commercial enterprise had been almost without precedent in the annals of diaspora Jewish communities, and post-Holocaust Jewish Hungarians continue to play a prominent role in the literary, cultural, political, and academic life of contemporary post-Communist Hungary. However, the core issues of dual identity and co-existence that were first broached with such optimism in the middle of the 19th century are still unresolved and are likely to engage the attention of new generations of Hungarian-Jewish writers into the foreseeable future.

Keywords: Hungarian-Jewish literature, Hungarian-Jewish authors, Jewish literature, Hungarian-Jewish history, Hungarian-Jewish emancipation, Jewish history, Hungarian-Jewish identity, Jewish identity, Hungarian anti-Semitism, Hungarian-Jewish cultural contributions, Jewish cultural contributions

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The title of my paper starts with the assertion that *"Árpád and Abraham were fellow-countrymen"*. Árpád was the leader of the seven Hungarian tribes in the conquest of Hungary, a figure of history and myth not unlike Abraham. The quote is from Márton Diósy,[1] a Hungarian-Jewish poet, who served as personal secretary to Lajos Kossuth, the leader of the 1848–49 Hungarian uprising.[2] As we shall discover, the problem of dual Hungarian and Jewish identity has continued to play a central role in the work of the majority of Jewish writers in Hungary ever since.

The earliest Jewish literature in Hungary was written in the Hebrew language, which was followed by Yiddish, then by German and only later by Hungarian.[3] The spread of Protestantism and Humanism in the seventeenth century had a positive impact on Jewish learning, and Jewish community life flourished in the areas of Hungary under Turkish control, where Jews enjoyed a much greater measure of tolerance than elsewhere in the country.[4] In 1686 the Turkish-held fortress of Buda[5] was captured and sacked by the Habsburg imperial armies, and the Turks were soon pushed out of Hungary. For the Jewish community, it took over a century to recover from the effects of the brutal carnage.[6] At the same time the *Haskala,*[7] the Jewish Enlightenment movement, was emerging in the German lands under the leadership of Moses Mendelssohn.[8] It aimed at spreading the ideals of Enlightenment within the Jewish communities, and it eventually arrived in Hungary via Vienna and Prague.[9] The aims of the *Haskala* were met with approval by the majority, whose interest lay in encouraging assimilation by members of Jewish communities, in return for granting Jews civil rights. Acquiring a mastery of the vernacular spoken by the majority was clearly critical for successful assimilation and for meeting the progressive expectations of the non-Jewish population. In Hungary, however, this had to mean the acquisition of not one, but simultaneously two languages, German and Hungarian.[10]

But the Enlightenment also gave rise to some new forms of anti-Semitic prejudices, which laid the foundations of modern anti-Semitism.[11] This was also the age of Romanticism, with its strong affinity for the Middle Ages, which helped revive some ancient anti-Semitic superstitions from medieval times.[12] Both these sets of prejudices became integral to mainstream Hungarian culture and literature from then on, though in fairness, some among the Romantics viewed the Jewish people as harmlessly exotic, and one or two prominent non-Jewish Hungarian authors even portrayed Jews and Jewry in a consistently positive light.[13]

In its struggle against prejudicial depictions, Hungarian-Jewish literature had come into being in the early to mid-nineteenth century with a marked didactic emphasis, and lyric poetry did not begin to appear until the eighteen sixties and seventies.[14] This was the period when the concept of a Hungarian of the Mosaic Faith was born. Enlightened writers in Jewish communities aimed at presenting their Hungarian credentials by articulating their own Hungarian national sentiments, demystifying Jewish customs, and rehabilitating the image of Jewish people held

by the majority community of Hungarians, whilst at the same time vigorously protesting stereotyped, demonising depictions of their people in mainstream Romantic writing. By the same token, however, they were by no means averse to censuring certain Jewish customs in the spirit of Enlightenment, as and when they deemed that appropriate.[15]

In 1840 the impassioned lines of Móric Bloch's[16] *Jewish Appeal to the Scythian*[17] *Nation* were enthusiastically welcomed on behalf of the majority community of Hungarians by Péter Vajda, in the following words:

> You are no longer the step-children of the nation –
> please feel welcome and make yourselves at home by the hearth of our national sentiments.[18]

And thus wrote Mór Szegfi, who fought as a captain of artillery during the uprising of 1848–49:

> Because, if in answer to our fervent prayers
> The shackles of slavery were burst asunder
> Prove we would that in this whole wide world
> There could be no better Hungarian than a Jew.[19]

The first Hungarian-Jewish Almanac was published in 1848 and its preface proclaimed a program for Jewish authors in Hungary. This was where Diósy articulated the motto contained in the title of this paper, signifying that Jewish people in Hungary carried a dual identity and saw themselves as both proudly Hungarian and proudly Jewish.[20]

By 1848, the greater part of the Jewish community in Hungary sincerely believed that they had been accepted by and into the Hungarian nation and gave their enthusiastic support to the struggle for independence from the Habsburgs.[21] However, official emancipation with fully equal civil rights was only proclaimed during the last dying days of the independence struggle, and the rights gained were then promptly lost in the final defeat.[22]

The end of the 1850s brought about a cautious revival with the launch of several journals and the occasional publication of a novel or play. By the 1860s Hungarian-Jewish literature was evolving beyond politics and was beginning to include love lyrics,[23] while a number of masterpieces of Hungarian literature were being translated into German by Jewish authors. Emancipation, the great dream, was finally realized in 1867, in tandem with the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, and the significant measure of independence gained by Hungary as a consequence.[24]

Hungary at that time had little in the way of a middle class,[25] and during the seventy-five years between the Emancipation and the Holocaust the magnitude of Jewish contributions to Hungary's literature, journalism, scholarship, culture, sci-

ence, industry, banking and commercial enterprise had been almost without precedent in the annals of diaspora Jewish communities.

The older generations who had gone through the struggle for emancipation welcomed these developments with unqualified optimism.[26] József Kiss,[27] one of the greatest lyricists of Hungarian-Jewish literature at that time, was a true master of the Hungarian language and a paragon of avowed dual identity. He was at once Hungarian and Jewish, a conservative and an innovator, an urbanist representing city folk and a folkish ruralist representing the peasant folk of the country-side.[28] Although the trauma of the infamous ritual murder trial of Tiszaeszlár had shattered his faith in emancipation,[29] for him it nevertheless remained axiomatic – an absolute and self-evident truth – that it was the Hungarian nation where he belonged:

> This land, where thou standeth, is the Promised Land!
> ... Jewish brother, thou too have a Fatherland, at last![30]

József Dóczi[31] was another significant Hungarian-Jewish writer of the same generation. Like Kiss, he was born during the Hungarian Age of Reform and was already an adult when he experienced the Jewish emancipation in Hungary. In contrast to Kiss, however, the dominant mood in Dóczi's writings leaned markedly toward disillusionment foreshadowing the mood of the generation of Hungarian-Jewish writers that were to come after him. Ultimately, Dóczi converted to Christianity, for the sake of his wife, but found no peace.[32]

Rapidly growing anti-Semitism during the eighties and nineties soon gave rise to ever deeper disillusionment within the community of Hungarian-Jewish writers and to a sense that the dream of the Hungarian of Mosaic faith would never be realized.[33] The ambivalent attitudes of this generation of Hungarian-Jewish authors were well-illustrated in the writings that appeared in the two most significant Hungarian-Jewish journals of the time: *Equality,*[34] founded in 1881, and *Past and Future,*[35] founded in 1911.[36] The title of the former bespeaks of a benchmark journal published by and for an assertive and self-respecting Hungarian-Jewish community that cherished the values of emancipation, critical as it might have been of certain aspects of assimilation. The second journal, however, reflected a growing sense of unease at the failures of assimilation and was willing to give publicity even to Zionism. Its editor-in-chief was József Patai,[37] who was also the most outstanding of the Hungarian practitioners of the *Ahavat Tzion*[38] or *Love of Zion* genre of Jewish poetry. In fact, the thoughts and feelings voiced by Patai in his poems no longer bore any resemblance to those of either Kiss or Diósy:

> Zion's heart beats only for you;
> For only a Mother can love, faithfully and forever.[39]

However, the most common stance of his contemporaries comprised adoption of a dual Hungarian-Jewish identity, critical of assimilation when it became unprincipled and destructive of a person's deepest sense of self, and also in search for a place under the sun within the fold of a majority ethnic-Hungarian community, which was signaling both acceptance and rejection.

Jewish themes were somewhat incidental to the art of Sándor Bródy,[40] one of the more eccentric figures in Hungarian literature. A representative of fin de siècle worship of beauty and youth, Bródy was also a latish example of dandyism in the Byronic tradition.[41]

Dezső Szomory[42] was an even greater stylist than Bródy, yet he was subjected to anti-Semitic attacks precisely because of the language of his plays and novels. Szomory was loudly accused of corrupting the Hungarian language, even though he was merely modernizing the pathos of the great romantic poet Vörösmarty and blending it with the language of Jewish people in Budapest.[43]

It was during that period at the beginning of the twentieth century that the controversial folkish-urbanist debate first erupted in Hungary. By creating a thoroughly sham and artificial distinction between the literature of "cosmopolitan Jewry devoid of national character" and works produced by "true Hungarians", the so-called folkish-urbanist distinction served mainly as a thinly veiled cover for coded anti-Semitism.

In 1912 the eminent historian of literature János Horváth mounted a savage onslaught on the journal *West*[44] and the literary and intellectual circle around it. From its beginnings *West* had served as the most important workshop in Hungary for introducing modern literary trends from the West, and there were many Jewish writers who contributed to the journal both as authors and as editors. Horváth leveled the accusation that *West* was corrupting the Hungarian language but in a subsequent letter he also made it clear that he thought the real culprits at the journal were the "dodgy Jews" who created its contents.[45] As a direct sequel, the journal *Twentieth Century*[46] published a survey question that frankly asked whether there was a Jewish question in Hungary,[47] thereby provoking an absolute storm of reaction from every corner of Hungarian intellectual, social and political life.

Despite rapid assimilation, an intensifying wave of anti-Semitism was gathering pace and was giving rise to embittered reactions from Jewish writers, reactions that would have been almost unimaginable a decade or two before.[48] Increasingly powerful voices were calling for a proud espousal of dual identity – as against unprincipled assimilation – and also for broad solidarity with the Jewish people.

From the turn of the century onwards Hungarian-Jewish novels began to increasingly challenge and censure the ways of assimilated Jewry. Péter Ujvári's[49] novel The New Christian[50] depicted just such a family in a pitiless portrayal of assimilationist Jews.[51] Lower middle-class tradesmen were the characters in *Out of the Ghetto*,[52] a novel by Tamás Kóbor,[53] who perceived in their miserable lives

a great deal more human dignity than in the lives of wealthy Jews, who converted to Christianity.[54] In *The Boys of Paul Street,*[55] a novel by Ferenc Molnár,[56] Geréb, a boy from a snobbish family, who gradually became alienated from his own traditions, was contrasted with Nemecsek, the son of an impoverished tailor, who remained tenaciously true to himself, no matter what.[57]

Clearly, the prominent role played by radical Jewish youth in the short-lived Communist dictatorship was only one of a number of underlying reasons that precipitated a rapidly deteriorating situation for the Hungarian-Jewish community between the two world wars.[58] The worsening situation cast the problem of Hungarian-Jewish identity into increasingly sharp relief, and the impact of the existential problems that were being faced inevitably came to be reflected in the literature of the times.

In his notorious essays, *The Age of Assimilation in Hungarian Literature 1867 to 1914,*[59] Gyula Farkas perceived literature in racial terms and saw the ethnic German and Jewish talent that successfully assumed leading positions in Hungarian literature after 1867 as suppressors of all that was worthy and noble in indigenous Hungarian qualities. The assertions of his paper were of course quite nonsensical[60] but represented relatively widespread attitudes among ethnic Hungarian intellectuals at the time.

Hungarian-Jewish writers responded in terms of five distinctly different approaches to the existential problems of being Jewish in Hungary.

The first of these was the "classical" dual identity position, as represented by, among others, Lajos Szabolcsi[61] and Aladár Komlós.[62] Although the works of András Komor[63] and Béla Zsolt[64] evinced a much more savage tone, they nonetheless still followed the path of emancipation, albeit with a strong emphasis on retaining a Jewish identity.

A mystical Catholicism was the second kind of response. Conversion to Christianity was a sincerely experienced act of redemption for literary figures like Sándor Sík,[65] Antal Szerb,[66] Miklós Radnóti,[67] Anna Lesznai,[68] György Sárközi.[69,70] On the other hand, István Vas[71] believed in a Christianity rooted in Jewish foundations.

A third small group had opted for Zionism, and disillusionment with embourgeoisement led a fourth group to turn to Communism, thereby also breaking away from their own Jewish identities equally as radically as the converts to Catholicism.

The fifth, and at the same time perhaps most striking response came from Károly Pap[72] – a Hungarian literary figure who had long been undeservedly neglected and only lately rediscovered – who urged an acceptance of Jewish destiny as a minority group.[73] But whilst uncompromisingly Jewish, he also felt tightly bound to Hungarian culture. Indeed, Pap had shown himself to be perhaps the most consistent Hungarian-Jewish writer of all, in the way he resolutely con-

fronted the tensions between the two. He experienced Jewishness not as religion, but as people, tradition and culture. His views and proposed program were set forth in his polemic essay *Jewish Wounds and Sins* that soon became a hot topic in literary circles.[74]

No review of Hungarian-Jewish literature of of the first four decades of the twentieth century could be complete without mentioning the literature of the metropolis. Jewish authors of lesser and greater talent were solidly represented among the practitioners of various forms of popular art, such as chansons and cabaret, popular literature and movies. Jenő Heltai,[75] Ernő Szép,[76] Menyhért Lengyel,[77] and Jenő Rejtő[78] were celebrated writers of popular works, the latter having perhaps been the most outstanding writer ever of Hungarian light fiction.[79]

The Holocaust, in which over half a million Jewish Hungarians perished, also resulted in irreplaceable losses to Hungarian literature. Apart from Rejtő, its victims included such luminaries as Károly Pap, Antal Szerb, Miklós Radnóti, Endre Andor Gelléri,[80] Zoltán Nagy,[81] and Dezső Szomory.[82,83] In *Night*, an autobiographical account of the horrors of his own Holocaust experiences, Nobel Prize winning author Elie Wiesel created a harrowing memorial to the last days of his own Orthodox community of Máramaros.[84]

But it was the Noble Prize awarded to Imre Kertész[85] that has really put the spotlight on Hungarian Holocaust literature.[86] During the decades of Communist totalitarian dictatorship,[87] the fundamental questions regarding the Hungarian Holocaust were always studiously avoided.[88] At the time, his Nobel Prize winning novel *Fateless*[89] could only be published after considerable difficulty, and the regime ensured that there would be barely any reaction at all on the part of either the public or the community of literary critics. The work of Kertész was defined by his own experience of the Shoah and is located well within the context of the historic search for existential answers by Hungarian-Jewish writers.[90] In order to adequately project the inhuman horror of it all, Kertész deliberately used a stunningly dispassionate tone and style. He courageously wrote and published his work in a Communist country where the totalitarian control mechanisms were virtually indistinguishable from those of Nazism, but whose rulers apparently failed to catch on to some darker ironies which were equally as applicable to them as to the Nazis.

Hungarian-Jewish writers responded in two main ways to the years under Communism: a minority continued to explore questions of identity, though most no longer did. The hidden anti-Semitism of the authorities and their efforts to consolidate Hungarian society created a far from ideal environment for manifestations of a Jewish search for identity, and it was therefore entirely unsurprising that few such could be found. In any case, only those writings could be published that conformed to images of Jewishness permitted by the Communist Party, and as in the case of Kertész, neither literary criticism of the published works nor any public discussion of the issues raised was ever actually permitted.[91] Ágnes Gergely[92] was

among the few who continued to explore the issue of dual identity,[93] whilst Péter Nádas[94] opted for assimilation in his novel, *The End of a Family Story.*[95]

However, most Hungarian-Jewish authors simply did not concern themselves at all with questions of identity; some openly abandoned their own Jewish identities and many became adherents of Communism.[96] The horrors experienced during the Holocaust were primary drivers for Jewish Hungarians to join the Communist Party during the early years of the Communist regime.[97] The communist writers and poets, as for instance László Benjámin[98] and Zoltán Zelk,[99] remained zealous adherents of the regime to the end, but some among them, such as István Eörsi[100] and György Konrád,[101] joined the democratic opposition in the seventies, as did prominent Hungarian cultural figures, such as Ágnes Heller and Sándor Radnóti.[102]

The Zionist authors comprised a small, but distinctly separate group. József Patai, who was already mentioned earlier, ultimately emigrated – made his aliya – to the Land of Israel, as did Avigdor Hameiri[103] and Hannah Szenes,[104] who later volunteered for war service with the British and in the end was captured and executed in Hungary. There were also Pál Salamon, Itamar Jáoz-Keszt, and a group of journalists who comprised the elite of Israeli journalism over a long period of time.[105] Many among them began their writing careers in Hungarian, and there were some who continued to write in the Hungarian language even in Israel. György G. Kardos[106] lived for years in Israel after the war, though later he returned to Hungary. He achieved considerable success with his trilogy[107] of tales of ordinary life in the Yishuv[108] in the years leading up to the Israeli War of Independence, which for some reason the Communist era censorship did not find threatening.[109]

After the regime change in 1989 and the democratic transformation that followed, the Jewish community resumed its struggle with the legacy of the Shoah[110] and with the unresolved issues of co-existence between Jewish and non-Jewish Hungarians.[111] There was the issue of coming to terms with the roles played by Jewish Hungarians during the forty-five years of Communist rule, and questions arose again and again as to the religious, cultural and national dimensions of Jewish self-definition, in particular the nature of its relationship with the State of Israel.[112] At the same time, Jewish intellectual life and literature began to thrive and flourish once again, in all its prolific colours. But its survival and its future directions will depend entirely on how the existential questions of being a Jewish Hungarian would ultimately be answered. The core issues of dual identity and co-existence that were first broached with such optimism in the middle of the nineteenth century are still unresolved and are likely to engage the attention of new generations of Hungarian-Jewish writers into the foreseeable future.

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Notes

1 Diósy (1812–1892) represented a generation of Jewish people in nineteenth century Hungary who deeply believed in the prospects of coexistence between Jewish and non-Jewish Hungarians.

2 The same Kossuth, who afterwards became also well-known in the United States.

3 I am referring here to literature in the broadest sense, since the first Jewish written records in Hungary – whether in Hebrew or Yiddish – were *Responsa*, which were religious in nature. The first significant achievement was *Sefer HaMinhagim* or *The Book of Customs* (םיגהנמה רפס) (1400), the work of Rabbi Yitzhak (Eizik) Tirnau or Nagyszombat (*Tyrnau* in German, *Trnov* in Slovak, a multi-ethnic township in historic Hungary, now in Slovakia), and the first work of literature was the still extant *Kinoth* or *Lamentations* (חוניק) in the Cracow Codex (1494), in which Joshua ben Chaim commemorated the auto-da-fé of the Jews of Nagyszombat.

4 Ephraim HaCohen (1616–1678), a significant scholar of the period, published his responsa in Turkish-ruled *Buda – Ofen* in German, a historic multi-ethnic township located in the area of present day Buda or Western Budapest – in a collection titled *Sha'ar Ephraim* or *Ephraim's Gate* (רעש םירפא) (1688) and it was also around that time that the first Yiddish language works appeared: first Chaim Bochner's *Commentary* (1710 then the Yiddish translation of *Sefer HaMinhagim*, (1400).

5 On the site of Castle Hill in present day Budapest.

6 The magnitude of the carnage carried out by the armies of Eugene de Savoya was such that it was not until the end of the eighteenth century that the Jewish community in Hungary had finally managed to recover from its consequences. In *Megilat Ofen or The Story of Buda* (זפוא מגילח), *Greater Lamentations* and *Lesser Lamentations*, Izsák Schulhoff depicted scenes of siege and massacre of shocking brutality. (Schulhof Izsák, *Budai krónika*, Magvető, Budapest, 1978) In the Kinoth, Schulhoff recounted the story of his family and of the Jewish community

of Buda, respectively. The event was also commemorated by Aharon ben Joseph of Prague, in his Yiddish language poem *A splendid new song of Buda (Ajn sajn naje lid fun Ojven).*

[7] חלכשה

[8] Its objective was to modernise Jewish culture and religion, one outcome of which was an endeavour to liken Jewish religious services to those of the Lutheran Church. Examples in point were the layout of Reform synagogues, the emergence of the organ and choir in religious services, and the fact that Drasoth חשרוד or sermons were increasingly given in the vernacular language. The Reform movement initiated by the Haskala eventually developed into the modern Conservative, Liberal and Reform streams of Judaism. It also brought about the beginnings of evolutionary changes in the use of the Hebrew language, and genres from modern European literature began to find their way into Hebrew poetry. These were the first beginnings of a process that a century later culminated in the revival of spoken Hebrew and the birth of the Modern Hebrew language.

[9] In 1816 Salamon Lövisohn published a collection of poems entitled *Melitzat Yeshurun* or *Yeshurun's Poesie* (חעילמ ןורושי); several other volumes of poetry and drama were also published around that time in Hungary.

[10] On the one hand, knowledge of German was mandatory, because it was the language of Habsburg rule, the lingua franca of the empire and the vehicle that conveyed the learning and ideals that were gradually percolating from the West. On the other hand, Hungarian national aspirations were becoming increasingly vocal and vigorous, and consequently it became also mandatory to acquire a mastery of the language of the Hungarians. The *Pest City Association for Propagating the Hungarian Language among Local Israelites (Honi Izraeliták Között Magyar Nyelvet Terjesztő Pesti Egylet)*, later the *Society for Hungarianization (Magyarító Egylet)*, was formed in 1843 with the aim of promoting the use of Hungarian language by members of the Jewish Community. In their daily life, the Orthodox used Yiddish as their vernacular, and although numerous Hungarian poems were translated into Hebrew, the actual use of Hebrew was confined almost entirely to liturgy and religious studies. Fearing assimilation, the Hatam (Moses) Sofer (1762–1839), the influential rabbi of *Pozsony* (*Pressburg* in German, *Bratislava* in Slovak) – a multi-ethnic town near Vienna that used to host the Hungarian Diet in historic Hungary and is now capital of Slovakia – took a firm stand in favour of Yiddish in 1831; but by that time Jewish community aspirations were unequivocally moving in favour of adopting the local vernacular.

[11] On the one hand, it charged the Jewish people with the crime of having turned Christianity loose on the world, but in the very same breath it also charged them with the crime of having rejected that Christianity, resulting in a rather invidious lose-lose position from a Jewish pespective. By the same token, however, most Enlightenment thinkers – among them Christian Dohm, a leading figure of German Enlightenment – held that individual Jewish persons became corrupted only by nature of their religion and culture, but that they could redeem themselves and become useful members of wider society if they broke away and emancipated themselves from their dark religious and cultural bonds.

[12] Such as ritual murder, the figure of the rapacious Shylockean usurer, and the depiction of the Jew as predestined for evil doing from birth, and doomed to eternal damnation for the sin of crucifixion.

[13] Jewish heroes were depicted with genuine sympathy, and as Hungarian patriots, by Mór Jókai, the most celebrated novelist of the era. Closer to our own times, another significant novelist, Zsigmond Móricz, perceived a quality of life in Jewry and a culture-shaping force that was in positive contrast with the backward conditions prevailing in the still predominantly rural Hungary of that time.

[14] It bears mentioning, however, that strong interest in public issues was also a feature of mainstream Hungarian literature, yet for all that, vigorous ideological orientation rarely ever came at the expense of quality.

[15] For instance, Mór Szegfi urged religious reforms, but at the same time he also depicted the wonderfully warm intimacy of Orthodox Jewish family life and especially that of *Kabalat Shabbat* (חלבק חבש), the weekly ritual of greeting the advent of Sabbath in observant households.

[16] (1815–1891), also known as Mór Ballagi, after he Hungarianised his name and converted to Christianity.

[17] People of a mythical Central Eurasian land of gold and horsemen, fondly presumed by the literary imagination of some in Hungary to have been among the forebears of ancient Hungarians.

[18] Free translation of *"Nem vagytok többé mostoha gyermekek – érezzétek ezt, és helyezzétek be magatokat – nemzeti érzelmek közepébe"* (Komoróczy – Frojimovics – Pusztai – Stribik, 127).

[19] Free translation of *"Mert ha végre hő imánkra / Szétszakad a rabbilincs / Megmutatjuk a zsidónál / Jobb magyar a földön nincs"* (Szalai, 60).

[20] That kind of thinking was also reflected in the works of Galician born Michael Heilprin (1822–1888), who made a name for himself with his Hungarian language poems by the age of twenty. After the failed 1848–49 uprising he emigrated and became a noted scholar in the United States.

[21] The anti-Semitic atrocities after the outbreak of the revolution and the banishment of Jews from the newly formed National Guard therefore both came as serious disappointments to Jewish Hungarians. But at that time, the wounds were still able to heal. The vast majority of Jewish people in Hungary were enthusiastic supporters of the cause of Hungarian independence, and leaders of Hungarian intellectual and literary life came out in vigorous support of the Jewish community. Jewish voices of disappointment were therefore few and far between (cf. Bernstein, Zsoldos).

[22] After the defeat, the Jewish community in Hungary could no more escape punitive retribution by the Habsburgs than the rest of the nation, and as a result there was significant emigration from the country.

[23] Such as those of Bertalan Ormódi (1836–1869), whose work was warmly praised at the time by the great Hungarian poet, János Arany himself (cf. Komlós, p. 85). However, though themes exploring the psyche of the individual began to receive greater attention, the accent continued to remain one of the core issues of Hungarian-Jewish co-existence and the nature of Jewish identity.

[24] Emancipation gave full civil rights to resident Jewish persons under Hungarian law, but it was expected that in return, from that point forward, Jewish people in Hungary would identify themselves as Hungarians of Jewish faith rather than as mere Jewish ethnics, and thereby help inflate the population count of ethnic Hungarians vis-à-vis other large ethnic groups under Hungarian jurisdiction within the territories of historic Hungary. During the second half of the nineteenth century the wave of surname Hungarianisations was mainly attributable to this.

[25] This situation was further exacerbated by the fact that in contrast to the British upper classes which were commercially oriented by tradition, Hungarian nobility had little interest or aptitude for pursuing economic value adding activities. On the other hand, business had always been the sole practical source of livelihood for Jewish people throughout their long history, and their aptitudes in this field filled a vacuum in post-Compromise Hungary.

[26] However, with the passage of time, critical perspectives on the processes of assimilation became more pronounced and several different modes of existence came into being within the Hungarian-Jewish community, most notably the Reform-Conservative, or Neologue, and the

Orthodox streams of religious observance. Nonetheless, the use of Hungarian language remained a unifying feature of almost all Hungarian-Jewish literary works.

27 (1843–1921).

28 The literary ideal of the times was the folkish-nationalist poetry best represented in the work of the two giants of Hungarian literature, Sándor Petőfi and János Arany. In contrast to many others, Kiss was no mere derivative imitator of the balladry of Arany but enriched the genre by giving poetic expression to the village Jewish person's dream of emancipation, and created heroes, such as Judith Simon, who in their thoughts and feelings did not differ one iota from the Hungarian peasants among whom they lived. Kiss was also the first in Hungary to elevate chanson writing and the so-called urbanist genre of poetry to the level of literary works of art.

29 "Open plunder became he in his native land, // Disinherited, wretched, exiled. // Maybe the grave would give him peace, // But even it would perhaps cast him out" – a free translation of "Szabad zsákmány volt a hazában, / Kitagadott, szegény, hazátlan. / A sír tán nyugtot ad neki, / de lehet, hogy az is kiveti" (cf. Komlós, p. 137).

30 Free translation of "E föld, hol állasz, az ígéret földje! (...) / Zsidó, immár van neked is hazád!" (cf. Komlós, pp. 2, 191).

31 (1848–1919).

32 In one of his later essays he expressed an inconsolable alienation in terms of a bitter lament over not knowing what to make of a world where ethnicity counts for more than decent humanity.

33 With that, the image of the Hungarian-Jewish peasant also disappeared gradually from Hungarian-Jewish writings. However, despite reservations and some openly critical attitudes, the vast majority of Jewish people in Hungary were by that time already irreversibly assimilated in spirit to the majority community of Hungarians. Thus, they had little interest in the idea of Zionism that was being vigorously promoted by the Hungarian-born Herzl, and his ideas never really gained popularity among Jewish Hungarians, except among largely unassimilated, Yiddish-speaking Orthodox communities in outlying rural areas, and in particular in the very large Orthodox communities resident at the time in the Transylvanian and Ruthenian provinces of historic Hungary.

34 *Egyenlőség.*

35 *Múlt és Jövő.*

36 There were of course numerous other significant journals and forums for debating the existential questions of dual identity and assimilation by Neologue (reform) Jewish journalists, intellectuals and rabbis, in particular the *Hungarian Jewish Review (Magyar Zsidó Szemle)* and other publications of the *Israelite Hungarian Literary Society (Izraelita Magyar Irodalmi Társulat).* Over the past decade and a half the works of some key contributors to this debate, such as Lajos Blau, Vilmos Bacher and Ignác Goldziher have been republished – in particular by the *Past and Future (Múlt és Jövő)* publishing house, which has been re-established after the regime change under the direction of editor-in-chief János Kőbányai (also cf. fn. 112).

37 (1882–1954). Among Hungarian-Jewish writers of the time, it was perhaps Patai who had moved furthest away from the generally accepted Hungarian-Jewish ideal of his generation.

38 (חבהא קריע)

39 Free translation of "Tiértetek csak Cion szíve dobban / Örökké, híven csak anya szeret" (Komlós 2, 150).

40 (1863–1924).

41 His language and style were at once naturalist, secessionist and impressionist. In *Liza Tímár* he censured the snobbishness of a rich Jew and brought him to heal for his disloyalty to the Jewish people; in *Doctor Faust (Faust Orvos),* he dealt critically with the topic of apostasy; in 1915 he wrote with compassion about the plight of Jewish refugees from Galicia. At the same time he

expressed a longing to leave Budapest for Bethlehem, and in the anti-Semitic atmosphere following the First World War and the short-lived Communist dictatorship, in the end he too felt compelled to convert to Christianity.

42 (1869–1944).

43 Indeed, as a writer, Szomory was the unmistakable voice of the Jewish public of Pest, the Eastern half of Budapest, where the bulk of the Jewish community resided.

44 *Nyugat.*

45 In fairness, his critique did not restrict its censure to Jewish authors only, but the ominous sentence in his letter had nonetheless further poisoned an already unhealthy atmosphere.

46 *Huszadik Század.*

47 "Van-e zsidókérdés Magyarországon?" in *Huszadik Század, A magyarországi zsidókérdésről*, special edition, Autumn 1917.

48 Imre Nagy, for example, longed to return to the village ghetto and Zoltán Somlyó (1882–1937), who opted for exile in 1912, held up as ideal not the assimilated Hungarian-Jewish peasant, but the village shopkeeper, who remained steadfastly loyal to his Jewish identity.

49 (1864–1931).

50 *Új keresztény* (1909).

51 Who converted to Catholicism, in order that they be allowed to build a Catholic church. As a consequence, the majority of their Jewish neighbours turned away from them, and when the church collapsed, the entire village turned on them, too.

52 *Ki a gettóból* (1911).

53 (1867–1942).

54 Not from sincere conviction but out of middle class conformism, thereby heedlessly surrendering their own deepest sense of self.

55 *A Pál utcai fiúk* (1909).

56 Whose plays made him world famous between the two world wars. (1878–1952).

57 Though only a small subsidiary thread in a larger story, the juxtaposition of these two characters is nonetheless integral to the essence of this novel.

58 The period started with pogroms in rural areas, then saw the introduction of numerus clausus (discriminatory policy in favour of ethnic Hungarians to restrict Jewish participation in higher education), later the inexorable rise to power of the organizations and parties of the extreme right, and later still the introduction of anti-Jewish legislation based on the Nuremberg laws, which ultimately ended in the Shoah.

59 *Az asszimiláció kora a magyar irodalomban 1867–1914* (1938).

60 Not least because Hungarian-Jewish writers in particular were at the forefront of processes of constantly ongoing creative regeneration in Hungarian literature, both in their innovative uses of the Hungarian language and in their innovative adaptations of new literary trends from the West.

61 (1889–1937). Lajos Szabolcsi was the publisher and editor-in-chief of *Egyenlőség*. In his *Bar Kochba, Son of a Star (Bar-Kochba, a csillag fia)*, a historical novel published in 1918, Szabolcsi presented the story of the heroic Jewish war of independence led by Bar Kochba against the Romans, in symbolic proof of the bravery of Hungarian-Jewish soldiers during the First World War, and repudiating thereby the charge of cowardice that was often used as the pretext for anti-Semitic atrocities.

62 (1892–1980).

63 Jenő, the hero of Komor's novel *The Descendants of Fischman S (Fischmann S. utódjai)* (1919) remained unaccepted by the upper classes to whose ranks he aspired, despite having converted to Christianity. Komor (1898–1944) presented the lower middle class Jewish char-

acters of this awkward tale as being totally devoid of human dignity and morals; people who were patently not Christians, but definitely no longer Jewish either.

64 (1895–1944).

65 (1889–1963).

66 (1901–1945).

67 (1904–1944).

68 (1895–1966).

69 (1899–1945).

70 Whether they undertook those conversions as the next logical step to follow upon the reform of Judaism or as a deliberate act of breaking away from their own Jewish identities. Oddly enough, this group became pioneers of a Catholic renewal in Hungary.

71 (1910–1991).

72 (1897–1945?).

73 His novel *Azarel* (1937) was autobiographical in its inspiration. In this novel Pap gave a compelling portrayal of the conflicts within the psyche of a child whose grandfather remained Orthodox, but whose father – modelled on his own father, the eminent scientist Miksa Pollák – was spell-bound by emancipation and almost completely assimilated. The little boy felt equally alienated from both their worlds, as did Pap himself, who also rejected both these positions. In his other significant novel, *The Eighth Station of the Cross (Nyolcadik stáció)* (1931), Pap portrayed a young painter who aspired to distil a Jesus of dogma-free religiousness from the sufferings of Christ. The novel happens to present a fascinating parallel to Chaim Potok's *My Name is Asher Lev*, whose Hassidic Jewish hero was also a painter, although actually, what he attempted to represent in terms of the sufferings of Christ on the cross were the sufferings of his mother. Both these works raised interesting issues regarding the nature of the image of Christ among the Jewish people. Pap's other works, such as his novel *You Have Liberated Me From Death (Megszabadítottál a haláltól)* (1928/29) and his play *Bat Sheba (Betsabe)* (1940) also had Biblical themes, albeit taken from the world of the Old Testament, rather than that of the New.

74 *Zsidó sebek és bűnök* (1935). Many, such as László Németh, concluded that Pap's program substantiated the proposition that ethnic Hungarians and Jewish Hungarians belonged to separate and utterly alien racial groups, but this view was based on a complete misunderstanding of what Pap wrote.

75 (1871–1957) – Was Herzl's nephew.

76 (1884–1953).

77 (1880–1974).

78 (1905–1943).

79 With his detective stories, rollicking sea adventures and adventures in the Foreign Legion, Rejtő created an undying memorial to the characteristic Jewish humour of Pest. But entertaining as it was, his humour concealed a certain wisdom and a peculiar sense of melancholy. One of his novels, *The Bone Brigade (Csontbrigád),* in fact turned out to be a fearfully prophetic and shockingly accurate depiction of the horrors of concentration camps, a prophecy that was ultimately fulfilled in the horrors of the Shoah.

80 (1906–1945).

81 (1884–1945).

82 (1869–1944).

83 Among the murdered there were also representatives of the tiny Yiddish language literature in Hungary, such as József Holder (1893–1945), who translated the masterpieces of Hungarian literature into Yiddish. His last major work, a translation of the Hungarian classic *The Tragedy of Man (Az ember tragédiája)* by Imre Madách, could never be completed. Orthodox commu-

nities in the outlying eastern and northeastern provinces of historic Hungary continued to cherish Yiddish and use it as their principal vernacular alongside Hungarian – as well as the Romanian, Ukrainian and German that were all commonly spoken in those areas – whilst Hebrew they used solely for purposes of liturgy and religious studies.

84 Also known as *Máramarossziget* – *Sighet* in Yiddish, *Sighetu Marmației* in Romanian – a North Transylvanian market town located in present day Romania, which used to be one of the most significant Orthodox communities in historic Transylvania.

85 (1929–).

86 Apart from memoirs written by survivors, such as Ernő Szép, *Stench of Humans (Emberszag)* (1945) and Jenő J. Tersánszky, *The Story of a Handcart (Egy kézikocsi története)* (1949), and the poetry of Miklós Radnóti, Holocaust literature in Hungary was primarily the work of two authors, both of them outside the Communist mainstream. One was the Catholic poet János Pilinszky, the other Imre Kertész.

87 Communism resembled Nazism in many respects, and not least in that both official and grass-roots anti-Semitism were just as rife in countries of the Soviet block, albeit taking somewhat more muted, subterranean forms. Consequently, it was unsurprising that the cultural politics of the time did its best to remain silent on the novel by Kertész, given that in light of its official anti-Nazi stance, it was hardly in a position to openly attack the novel for its chosen topic.

88 Questions such as how could it have happened that so many in Hungarian politics and among ordinary Hungarians became such active participants in the disenfranchisement of Jewish Hungarians, the misappropriation of their property, and ultimately in their deportation to the death camps. The undigested horror of the Hungarian Holocaust remains an unresolved issue in Hungary to this day, for Jewish and non-Jewish Hungarians alike.

89 *Sorstalanság* (1975) – Translation of the title as *Fateless* by Katharina Wilson, Professor of Comparative Literature at University of Georgia, was a not unreasonable adjectival compromise with the nominalised Hungarian form of the word.

90 Gyuri Köves, the hero of the novel, was innocently convicted, exactly as Josef K was in *The Trial* by Kafka. Totalitarianism degrades human beings into faceless and fateless objects, where victims come to regard what befell them almost as matter of course, the natural order of the world. This is why Gyuri spoke of bliss in the camps.

91 Among those who nevertheless addressed some of the existential issues of being Hungarian and Jewish in post-Holocaust Hungary were authors like Mária Ember, Pál Várnai, Pál Bárdos and György Gera.

92 (1933–).

93 "Let my withered right hand be the Amen, // To forgetting thee, O Jerusalem! // And let my aching face convulse unto my lips, // Upon forgetting thee, János Arany!" in free translation of "Hát kihűlt jobbom legyen rá az Ámen, / ha elfeledlek egyszer Jeruzsálem / És fájó arcom rángjon majd a számhoz, / ha elfeledlek egyszer Arany János."

94 (1942–).

95 *Egy családregény vége* (1977). The hero of the novel bore the dual name of Peter Simon, thereby symbolizing the intention of the grandfather for the Jewishness represented by Simon to dissolve into the Christianity of Peter.

96 As for instance, Tibor Déry or István Örkény. Actually, this process was already ongoing well before the war, having started at around the time of the First World War. At that time Jewish Hungarians tended to join the Communists for reasons of disillusionment with emancipation and out of faith in the advent of a society without religious or ethnic divisions. Not a few intellectual luminaries joined the Communist Party at the time, as for instance György Lukács, the eminent philosopher of aesthetics and literature.

[97] There was mutual interest at work. On the one hand, the Communists needed to boost their numbers with politically reliable cadre in a defeated but basically hostile country. On the other hand, many among the Holocaust survivors were not merely seeking revenge, but came to be sincerely convinced, at least for a while, that perhaps salvation could indeed lie in an idealist, classless, race-free and internationalist Communist society.

[98] (1915–1986).

[99] (1908–1981).

[100] (1931–).

[101] (1933–).

[102] Former students of György Lukács and subsequently his close associates.

[103] (1890–1970) – Formerly Feuerstein, arrived in Israel in 1921.

[104] (1921–1944).

[105] Among them the Israeli journalist, editor, politician and now government minister Tommy Lapid, formerly Tamás Lampel, a leader of what used to be the "Hungarian Gang" in the community of journalists in Israel.

[106] (1925–1998).

[107] *The Seven Days of Abraham Bogatir (Avraham Bogatir hét napja)* (1968), *Where Have the Soldiers Disappeared (Hová tűntek a katonák)* (1971), and *End of the Story (A történet vége)* (1977).

[108] ישוב (Settlement), shorthand reference for the Jewish community in British Mandatory Palestine before the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel by David Ben Gurion on 14 May 1948.

[109] It ran into several editions, and was virtually alone in having been able to slip through Communist censorship and present to the Hungarian public a more balanced picture, in sharp contrast to the rabid anti-Zionist propaganda of the Communist Party.

[110] Including further Shoah memoirs, such as Miklós Nyiszli's *Auschwitz: A Doctor's Eyewitness Account (Mengele boncolóorvosa voltam)* (1993).

[111] Indeed, these questions engaged not just the Jewish community, but also many segments of the ethnic Hungarian community as well, some on positive ways, some recalling the worst excesses of Hungarian anti-Semitism in the past.

[112] As attested by recent works of post-Communist Hungarian-Jewish authors, such as György Dalos, Imre Goldstein, János Kőbányai and Gábor T. Szántó, and the publishing and editorial work of figures such as Kőbányai (also cf. fn. 36) and Szántó, who is also the editor-in chief of *Szombat,* a quality current affairs journal published by and on behalf of the Jewish community of Hungary that features the work of leading Hungarian-Jewish journalists and commentators, such as László Seres, Attila Novák, János Gadó, and György Tatár.

THE DISINTEGRATED JEW: JEW, HUNGARIAN, COMMUNIST

AN IDENTITY SKETCH

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The word "Jew" is used as a more or less self-evident identity category, even though the content it conveys has been just as much transformed by secularisation, modernisation, assimilation and acculturation as any other identity category. In the world before secularisation and the modern idea of the nation – up to the nineteenth century in Hungary – a Jew was somebody whose religion was Jewish. The internal cracks caused the Judaism-based concept of Jewishness in Hungary to fall apart within a couple of decades. The fragmentation of Jewry was no less down to the challenge of national and secular identities, but these challenges only took effect because of the confirmations they promised in different situations. Departing from traditional Jewish ways was "rewarded" by social and intellectual success. Zionism – whose founder, Theodor Herzl, was brought up in the culture of Budapest and Vienna – conceived Jewish identity as a national identity and attempted to bring Jews, who were following divergent routes, together through self-identification with the nation. The Holocaust did not change the historical nature of the disintegrated Jewish identity. The anti-Semitic, disenfranchising Hungarian national consciousness said: it does not matter what you are – if I say you are a Jew, you are a Jew. Communism said: it doesn't matter what you are, if you are not a Communist, you cannot be anything else.

Keywords: Judaism, Jewishness, identity, nation, Holocaust, anti-Semitism

Our concepts often present themselves as ready interpretations. Their casual use saves us much effort by making something appear "self-evident" that would otherwise demand an explanation. The word "Jew" is used as a more or less self-evident identity category, even though the content it conveys has been just as much transformed by secularisation, modernisation, assimilation and acculturation as any other identity category. Whatever meaning we ascribe to it, the word "Jew" has denoted a minority throughout the diaspora, and as with every minority, what is decisive is the content of the category expressing the majority, and how that content changes. Majority and minority – under any interpretation – contextualise each other, and take their meanings with reference to each other.

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The question of what is what, and how we define things, is a matter of decoding, or more precisely the means of decoding. For this, of course, we also need the words and concepts by which we attempt to say anything at all.

The means of decoding is history itself. History can be interpreted as the story of society, the course of politics, and as many other things, such as awareness, identity, self-identity, and classifications of ourselves made or expressed by others. This is true for Jews, Hungarians, and Communists. Seemingly straightforward identities could be ambiguous, and sometimes mutually entangled, or even deliberately confused. Interpretation is more and more difficult, if for no other reason than we also have to interpret the interpreter. The history of our identities is in a certain sense equivalent to ourselves.

Jew

In the world before secularisation and the modern idea of the nation – up to the nineteenth century in Hungary – a Jew was somebody whose religion was Jewish. The Jewish religious enlightenment in German-speaking Europe reinterpreted much of religion and religious rules, and thus created major differences among believers of the same religion.[1] Followers of the diverging movements may have criticised, indeed vilified, each other, but this did nothing to change the fact that Jewishness meant Judaism, even if there were wider and wider differences as to what was regarded as Judaism. Jews argued and wrangled with each other, but everybody else regarded them as Jews on the grounds of their religion. In consequence, prejudices against Jews were known as anti-Judaism, since they were expressed in the name of Christianity, against Jews as followers of Judaism.

However, the internal cracks caused the Judaism-based concept of Jewishness in Hungary to fall apart within a couple of decades. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, religious identity and self-identity had broken into three distinct groups, namely: the Neology, orthodoxy, and "status quo ante" movements. Depending on the movement they adhered to, Jews went to different synagogues, dressed differently and led different lives. As Judaism's cracks deepened, Jews in Hungary became divided. Their uniform image in the eyes of non-Jews could, of course, have remained intact, but other changes were taking their effects on the concept of the Jew.

The change was driven by the mutually reinforcing and interrelated processes of secularisation and the modern concept of the nation. The Christian universalism of the feudal world was steadily eroded by the new, particular, and at the same time secular concept of the community, the nation. A worldly community, the nation did not dissolve the religious differences between people, but reduced them to insignificance in comparison with the former world-view. Insignificance in effect

meant secularisation. It was a very bumpy journey, and conclusion in the church policy laws passed in the early 1890s, when state and church were divorced, and the state treated the Jewish religion as a "recognised denomination," in short accepted it.

In the eyes of the state, at least, religion became a personal matter, or more precisely it was left to individuals, or free associations of individuals, to form their own world-view. Such a normative solution was accompanied by a much more contradictory process in society, since strong religious constraints retained their hold on marriages and social relations, but the legislation contributed to the breakdown of the old determinacies.

Jews representing a religious identity had no national consciousness. This left them free to choose, or rather forced them to make a choice, as regards their national affiliations. But national affiliation, as nations took form and the Christian universalism of the feudal world gradually faded, became an identity of increasing importance.

In the 1780s it was government policy to Germanise the Jews, forcing them to take German surnames. However, since the Germanising authorities were thinking in terms of imperial rather than national identity, the question still remained open. For Jews without national consciousness, the real challenge was Hungarian identity.[2] The Hungarian national movement involved more than just linguistic cohesion, it held the promise of an equal ranking membership in the political community. For the Jews, the promise of equal political rank was of double significance because they were the only social group without a national identity.

During the Reform Era and in 1848 the Jews experienced how often and in what way existing social prejudices, the tradition of anti-Judaism and the intention of equal rights can combine. They also experienced how the days of March 1848, with their promises of equality, were followed by riots involving anti-Judaist rhetoric and tending towards modern anti-Semitism. And of course they experienced the – somewhat belated – acceptance of equal rank by the modern Hungarian national consciousness when an act of Parliament was passed on the issue in 1849.[3]

Beset with pitfalls and setbacks as it was, the process nonetheless gained further reinforcement immediately after the Compromise in 1867, when equal rights and emancipation for Jews were specifically enshrined in law.

The possibility and challenge of national identity became an increasingly broader reality under the liberal political disposition in the years that followed. The rising current of assimilation – a term that covers a highly complex set of phenomena – swelled to become the mainstream of Jewish affairs. Examining the appeal that assimilation held for the Jews explains much in social terms of what was behind religious fragmentation. The power of Neologism grew from national – and thus secular – identification. Jews, at least in the minds of many, became Hungarians, or more precisely Hungarians of the Mosaic faith. The power and depth of

assimilation may seem less convincing in retrospect, but the fact remains that more and more Jews in Hungary saw themselves as Hungarians and were increasingly looked on first of all as Hungarians, and only secondarily as Jews. Just like others for whom national identity was primary, with other considerations – such as being Catholic or Protestant – coming only in second place. It was this momentum of change that created the political conditions for the divorce of church and state.

And so the Jews, who had identified themselves by their religion, acquired for themselves a national identity. Still regarded as Jews on the basis of their religion, they nonetheless became Hungarians. They were statistically classified as such and were regarded as such by members of other nations.[4]

At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, the picture changed again.[5] It was a two-way change, stemming both from intra-Jewish affairs and from a discourse that reflected various processes and led to a new framework of attitudes.

Many Jews, as traditional Judaism gradually waned and identification with worldly affairs spread, began to regard religious Jewishness as a burden that could be shed. It was a burden in the first place because, even after reforms, it prescribed many regulations obstructing everyday secular life. It was simply uncomfortable. But abandoning religious constraints also made it easier to escape from prejudices against Jews. And on the spiritual side, the personal need for the Jewish religion diminished because it was replaced in many respects by membership of a community.

Responses varied depending on individuals' positions: Hungarianisation of names became common, and not a few people, after rising in society, actually converted to Christianity in the hope of speeding and securing their rise, and making themselves more firmly Hungarian. And then there came the opportunity to identify with something universal and very secular, going well beyond national particularism: socialism. Its promise and its rituals made it the universal religion of international and worldly redemption, sweeping aside every religious, national and other inherited cultural dimension.

The result was the hitherto unthinkable phenomenon of the Jew who was no longer a Jew. None of this ran to a final consummation, of course, and it was the divergences along the way that lent the traditional view of the process, the fragmentation and disintegration of the Jewry, its characteristic features. It was a double incompleteness. Firstly, no single approach proved to have sufficient merits to completely eliminate, liquidate, or prevent the progress of the other approaches. By the early twentieth century there were living in the same country the traditionally recognisable figures of religious orthodoxy, the muscular communities of reformed Jews, ambitious converted "Jews" who made it right up to ministerial rank, socialist intellectual agitators, and more-Magyar-than-the-Magyars writers,

poets, and patriotic poetasters.[6] Then there was the incompleteness of the individual kind. It was possible to take up diverging processes simultaneously, or to vary the tempo, and a single person or family often declined to follow one route or another to its conclusion. Socialist-minded young intellectuals pursued their studies with the financial support of families who maintained and cultivated Jewish traditions; the relations of converted Jews remained Jewish, and intellectuals declaring identification with Hungarian culture actually looked towards German culture. There was wide scope for variation and innumerable "inconsistencies." All signs that the concept of "the" Jew had been shattered.

The fragmentation of Jewry was no less down to the challenge of national and secular identities, but these challenges only took effect because of the confirmations they promised in different situations. Departing from traditional Jewish ways was "rewarded" by social and intellectual success. Success took the form of honoured position and acceptance within Hungarian society, reputation, high office, or the grant of respect from the newly-entered community. Despite the many attendant contradictions, disintegration itself opened the way to everything that had been absent from the traditional life of centuries lived in social subordination and secondary status.

This confirmation in turn brought other consequences, however. In the feudal world Christendom represented the subordination of the Jewry within the power system in the form of anti-Judaism. Anti-Judaism fitted perfectly as the ideology for deprivation or curtailment of rights, since if Jewishness meant identity with the religion, then the religious argument was enough to "cover" the Jews.

So what was to happen as the traditional concept of Jewishness was disintegrating and Jews were appearing as an unprecedented social success story? The weapon of anti-Judaism could only be deployed against those stuck in traditionalism and thus not even competitors in the capitalising bourgeois world.

For ideas to enforce subordination, constraint and elimination of Jews, a new kind of argument had to be sought – across Europe as well as in Hungary.

The new language of the anti-Jewish discourse was anti-Semitism.[7] It often mixed in elements of anti-Judaism (like the "blood libel") but the real targets were Jews in the mainstream of the developing bourgeois society.

However, anti-Semitism had to contend with the great paradox that the Jewish community, in traditional terms, had disintegrated. To be effective, it had to imbue that fragmentation with an underlying unity. A narrative had to be substituted for the reality.

This narrative appeared in several places, since similar processes were in progress elsewhere in Europe, but featured with particular prominence in the world of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The interesting story here does not concern the form of words, but what was actually said, or the propositions behind them. This

meant not stylistic differences, or certain statements, but the concept of Jewishness.

In this respect modern anti-Semitism partially followed anti-Judaism and partly went beyond it, presenting Jewishness – which was in fact going through a complete break-up – as a singular social and mental whole. In its view the Jew was a totality. The total Jew was a Jew in every area of life. He ate, spoke and thought as a Jew. A Jew was a Jew even when he was not a Jew. What made him dangerous was appearing to be something when he was in fact something else. Stigmatisation was a mechanism not reserved for Jews. Prejudiced thinking led to a similar way of attributing utter evil by the way of speaking about witches or sexual minorities. But the Jew was not just an absolute entity in the way implied or alleged for other groups by similar ways of speaking. The Jew appeared as a secret, hidden organisation, and his object was to control everything via a conspiracy pervading the nation and the whole world. In this conception the "Jewish conspiracy" was immeasurably dangerous because the Jew was absolute, while so often being invisible. The anti-Semitic conception varied in nuance, sometimes being strongly explicit, elsewhere somewhat cloaked, but constant in the essentials. The approach naturally demanded an explanation of the absolute Jew and did not hold back from drawing conclusions. The explanation shifted increasingly in the racial direction, and the conclusions towards demands for restriction and exclusion of people and phenomena interpreted as Jewish.

Just as the traditional Jewish identity was splitting apart, the "absolute Jew" idea came into existence and viewed the separation, a "reality," as nothing more than an attempt to conceal, to mask the absolute.

The consequences of this special duality were manifold, with the narrative setting off a widespread reaction. The break-up of traditional Jewry had set off the competitive appearance of Jews in areas where they had not hitherto been present. This, coupled with their attainment of equal rights in the secularising world, gave modern anti-Semitism its strength.

One major consequence was the appearance of Jewish ethnic awareness.[8] Those for whom the anti-Semitic narrative and its social force were proof that assimilation was doomed to failure, and that a return to traditional Jewishness was impossible, started to think in terms of a national alternative to the Jewish concept and Jewish identity. Zionism – whose founder, Theodor Herzl, was brought up in the culture of Budapest and Vienna – conceived Jewish identity as a national identity and attempted to bring Jews, who were following divergent routes, together through self-identification with the nation. It attempted to bring followers of both Judaism and socialism into the nation, especially since Herzl conceived the society of the future country of the Jewish nation, Israel, as a kind of socialist utopia. At all events, the end of the nineteenth century found Zionism taking its place as another subdivision of Jewry.

Zionism found few supporters, certainly among Hungarian Jews,[9] mainly because another kind of reaction seemed more practical against the attacks and power of anti-Semitism. Even Herzl hesitated, one of his visions being that the Jews should convert to Christianity, as if symbolically completing the process of assimilation. However, he accurately perceived that changing religion could not give a relevant response to the increasingly racial basis of anti-Semitism.

The more promising reaction at the time was to continue the logic of social assimilation, which was going on in any case. It was the articulation of the idea that assimilation would better weld together the citizens of the homeland at the social level, and the assumption of the national – Magyar – identity would do the same politically and psychologically. Hungarian Jewish leaders unceasingly proclaimed identity with Hungarianness and not infrequently gave voice to Hungarian nationalism.[10] The advantage of this constantly-asserted assimilative identity was that it obstructed the advance of anti-Semitism – as illustrated by the much stronger spread of anti-Semitism in Austria and Vienna, where there was no national identity. But it came at a price – a price that was most sorely paid in the twentieth century. Overemphasis on assimilative identity inhibited the development of a truly integrative identity. It also concealed some cracks and incongruities, which were arising in the assimilation process at the time – certain aspects of lifestyle and values suggesting that Jews could be Hungarian in ways other than those with whom they were trying to assimilate, or simply that there really were some divergent elements. A Jew turned baron could take on the full Magyar panoply just as a traditional Hungarian baron did, but there nonetheless remained differences at certain points. A Jewish law student could attend the same university as his Christian fellow-Hungarian, but his legal career would be predictably different for the sole reason that he was a Jew and the other was not. The list of examples goes on, and are in many cases quantifiable. Even so, in the world of identity policy, actual differences were concealed by assimilative consciousness, and the anti-Semitic reading misinterpreted them as signs of the enemy. There was no space for Hungarian Jews to express themselves – to either themselves or others – in terms other than just assimilation and anti-Semitism or, in their own view, in terms of assimilation and dissimilation (Zionism). The option of coexistence, or of integration, therefore, did not open up. Its absence concealed the actual differences and pettified, almost exalted, assimilative identity. (For instance, it made it possible to hold up as an example a Jew who achieved professorial status, but covered up the discrimination he encountered, and its ultimate effect.) Or taken from another aspect, the joys and virtues of assimilation were proclaimed, but traditional choices were preferred in marriage strategy.[11] This absence, or more accurately the failure to articulate and to find a real identity, left the Hungarian Jews almost completely defenceless when state policy ultimately disregarded their assimilative identification.

Hungarian Jews entered the twentieth century with their traditional identity in decay and the concept of the "Jew" having changed both for themselves and the society around them. The change had not swept away what was there before, but had created new variants on old themes. Religious consciousness ranged from orthodoxy to Neology, national consciousness from Hungarian nationalism to Jewish nationalism, and lifestyle from the traditional to the fully secular. And some Jews had gone beyond a shift in identity: taking full advantage of the secular world's opportunities, they had abandoned all of these variations and become Christians, atheists, or socialists. The numbers representing the different identities varied very widely, of course, but this is a matter for social history rather than the history of identity.

The external world encouraged and tolerated this, and often granted confirmation of it. Encouragement, toleration and confirmation ensured the authenticity of a wide diversity and choice of the identities, however aesthetically jarring some, or all, of them might be. But while Jewishness was disintegrating, a reaction was developing against Jews that identified as its enemy the "total Jew." Aspirations to integration crumbled, and the question from then on was: if Jewish identity has fragmented, but the imaginary creature of the total Jew is being identified as the enemy, what will happen next?

This question could only be answered by the majority, which we will refer to collectively as Hungarians.

Hungarian

Hungarian national consciousness, and Hungarian nationalism, followed without many deviations the same standard structural course of birth and formation as those of other nations. What is important here, however, is the kind of national consciousness into which Jews assimilated, and how the internal content of that national consciousness changed in the twentieth century.

The defining force in the birth of the Hungarian national consciousness was the inability of a feudal, aristocratic society to satisfy bourgeois needs via the accustomed means of Christian universalism. Bourgeois energies could only be nourished by the creation of a new community, one in which as many people as possible had an interest in operating and maintaining it. Privileges had to be spread wider, and in a way that the new form of social organisation maximised its own potential.

National identity here meant that the privileged community was replaced by a linguistic, or a cultural community. This process started in the final third of the eighteenth century and continued up to the reform era. It unfolded as the result of much conscious effort, from a recognition of the Hungarian language's impor-

tance to its adoption as the sole national language in 1844. It involved language reform, the creation of the Hungarian Academy, grammar, education – an enormous quantity and breadth of effort.

The nation as a linguistic-cultural community is a structural element in the formation of every nation. A quirk of the Hungarian case, with a unique implication for the identity question, is that fear was one of the inspirations for nation-formation, and indeed one of its results. The "inspirational" fear was that if the Hungarians did not become a European nation, then they would be left out of the current of European civilisation and be cast into poverty. Some were also afraid that the aristocratic structure did not offer sufficient protection against absolutism. And some were afraid that only a new community consciousness could offer protection against peasant dissatisfaction. From our point of view it is indifferent which fear was well grounded and which was not. Coming from different directions, the fears all pointed in one direction: the need to create a nation, a national consciousness. But as soon as the ideal had been coined, there came another fear: the Hungarian nation could easily subside in the surrounding sea of Germans and Slavs. In other words, the vision of national death arose almost immediately. If the aristocratic order, devoid of national character, remained, then both the aristocracy and the country would come to an ignominious end; but if the nation came into being, then the Hungarian would be rent asunder by the overwhelming power of other nations.

There was only one solution offering any real prospects, and the cultural-based national consciousness found the appropriate response almost immediately, while constantly maintaining the fear motif.

This response asserted the insufficiency of thinking in terms of a cultural community alone. There was also a need to form a political community consciousness, almost in parallel. The content of political community could be none other than civil liberty. Civil liberty was the only course that could ensure the leading social role of the existing elite, while offering the peasantry – which made up the mass of the country's inhabitants – some real prospects, and something with which they could identify. A necessary concomitant of equal rights and civil property rights was liberation of the serfs. The national awareness that formed during the Reform Era and came to political fruition in 1848/49 thus stretched out along two axis: cultural and political. The concept of "being Hungarian" was harnessed to the concept of liberty, thus granting the opportunity for affiliation to those who could not meet the cultural criteria. Many who took up arms for the Hungarian cause in 1848/49 could hardly speak the language. In 1849 several people executed by the suppressors of the War of Independence, and thus raised to the "national pantheon" as martyrs of the Hungarian cause, would not, in cultural terms, have satisfied the criteria of Hungarian national identity.

The political concept of the nation – "one political nation" – remained alongside the cultural one even after 1867, since the same liberty applied to everyone re-

gardless of national affiliation in the cultural sense. There was no national distinction in terms of rights, and the universal value of freedom took expression in the Hungarian political nation.[12]

This national identity had its own limits, of course, finding it hard to deal with those who considered their own cultural identity more important than the values of liberty applying equally to everyone. Quite simply, this Hungarian national identity was not acceptable to some ethnic groups, since they were more interested in forming their own identity. (On the other hand, liberal Hungarian nationalism did not really suppress such initiatives.) At the same time, liberal Hungarian national awareness enabled German-speaking town dwellers, without any duress, to become Hungarianised, and also opened up to the assimilation of Jews. Indeed, as has already been mentioned, the Jews were first offered personal equal rights and then religious rights, and the Jews could hardly have wished for better. Those seeking in liberty a remedy for fears found common cause with those seeking to escape from a secondary and subordinate situation, even if, as we have seen, it was a cause full of conflicts and internal cracks. The Jews quickly learnt Hungarian, and the Hungarians could count on more and more Hungarians.

The Hungarian national identity naturally, like all identities, had its own vision of the enemy. However, the enemy was primarily not within the ranks. The threat was from the Germanising, assimilating Habsburg power, and from ethnic groups seeking their own identities. This led to war with the Habsburgs and some of the ethnic groups in 1848/49. It could quite reasonably be termed a civil war, except in the remarkable fact that armed conflict did not take place among all ethnic groups and above all not between the Hungarians themselves.[13] This meant that liberty was to a certain extent capable of counterbalancing the threat of national and social conflicts.

The vision of the enemy remained even after the Compromise of 1867, but became politically segmented. Those who saw the enemy as a combination of the Habsburgs and the ethnic minorities were bitterly opposed to the compromise and kept a cold distance from the ethnic movements. The espousers of settlement with the Habsburgs saw the main danger in the ethnic minorities. And finally, there evolved a democratic national consciousness which wanted to make allies out of the ethnic groups, so as to be able to confront the Habsburgs (Kossuth).

The differences in emphasis betrayed some alterations in the state of national identities, but none of these saw the main enemy as being within. On the contrary, Hungarian identity, because of the power of the enemy in whatever conception, began, in a sense, to come together. For example, regional self-identification within Magyars shrank to insignificance. There were the odd patches of colour, like the Palóc, but Hungarian identity did not take form as a fabric of regional identifications. It was a coherent whole that at most took on regional nuances.

A national consciousness envisaging an internal enemy appeared in the 1870s, in the form of the political party of anti-Semitism.[14] This national consciousness increasingly placed the concept of being Hungarian along the ethnic – "Magyar" dimension, and set out to make restriction of liberty a part of national identity and Christianity an exclusive cultural element of being Magyar. This is why it found Jews as the main enemy and asserted a national consciousness of which equality under the law was not part of the Hungarian national identity. It wanted to extract indivisible liberty from the ideal of the Magyar nation.

The political party formation of the Magyar national consciousness pursuing narrowed rights and cultural criteria, and seeking an internal enemy, soon fell apart, but the new national identity was there to stay. Those in power kept to the "original" concept of identity, since the ethnic Magyars were in a minority in their "own" country, and so a "truncated" national consciousness lay very far from their interests. However, this did not cause the narrowing interpretation of the nation to go away, or prevent it gaining new force in the mid-1890s with the formation of the Catholic People's Party.[15] What drove the ideals and organisation of the Catholic People's Party was the struggle against the separation of church and state. It conceived Magyar and Christian to be the same thing, and liberal developments, such as the ecclesiastical policy acts, to be destroying that link. It should be added that the separation of church and state was a long drawn-out process, urged by Ferenc Deák even in the 1870s, and was important for reasons that went far beyond liberal dogma. The purpose was to minimise the significance of the Catholic-Protestant antipathy and thus strengthen the power of cultural solidarity among minority Hungarians.

By the turn of the century, Hungarians – not least because of Jewish assimilation to the liberal Hungarian identity – had become the majority in Hungary. This fact, coupled with the problems created by a sclerotic system unable to make social reforms, strengthened the national consciousness seeking an internal enemy just as much as the appearance of social-political radicalism in its various forms. The latter put the main emphasis on social and political, rather than national identity, and by this means sought to distinguish between good and evil.[16] The former, the narrowing national consciousness, partly in reaction to socio-political radicalism, found more and more criteria for not admitting, indeed for excluding people from the nation. The original, "traditional" national consciousness sounded increasingly empty, since it was least able to supply what there was the greatest demand at the turn of the century: an internal enemy.

For a brief moment, the First World War gave new strength to the traditional national consciousness, since the population had above all to be mobilised against an external enemy. At the end of the war, the avoidance of the consequences of defeat preferred the socially radical "Magyar" concept or – when this seemed to be insufficient – class-based internationalism going beyond Hungary.

But the consequences of defeat in war proved unavoidable. It was this, and not the revolutions, that dictated the content of Hungarian national consciousness. In the truncated country, Hungarians became an overwhelming majority, but Hungarian nationalism had suffered a catastrophic defeat, losing two-thirds of its historic state territory, and one-third of the people, who thought of themselves as Hungarian, found themselves subject to another state. Some of the traditional enemies of the Hungarians had won. The Habsburgs had disappeared, but the ethnic groups reaped an unprecedented triumph.

The new counterrevolutionary regime drew its own lessons from the defeat, or at least grasped the opportunity of raising its own national consciousness to state policy. It viewed the catastrophe as having been caused by liberal policy, which had been too yielding. Liberal Hungarian national consciousness thus took the blame for the defeat. By resurrecting the "restrictive" national consciousness, the regime could hold up the image of an enemy against which they had a chance of "winning." It was a view that completely obscured the unique achievement of liberal Hungarian national consciousness in extending the existence of historical Hungary; and in pursuing it, they avoided confrontation with the fact that no form of Hungarian national consciousness could guarantee the long-term existence of Greater Hungary.[17]

With the concept of "Hungarian" having branched in many directions, the thoughts and acts of the Horthy era increasingly followed the path of "restriction." These thoughts were just a continuation of a line going back to the 1870s, but the acts immediately declared that Hungarianness was incompatible with the concepts of equality under the law and the indivisibility of civil liberty. A programme of legislation instituted discrimination on religious grounds, targeted primary at the Jews. However, at least until the late nineteen thirties, the system did not yield to pressure for a national concept based on race, and the guiding state principle remained that of cultural restrictions. (Indeed, in the later period of consolidation, the regime granted concessions even here, although it did not completely renounce the discriminative nationality concept on the unofficial level.)

This was the concept of nation, and national identity, that was invested with political power. Of course there were other versions existing in society, including the culturally inspired, liberal concept of the nineteenth century. National identity was not a homogeneous concept that applied right across society, but since Hungary was an independent country, the authenticating force of state power could keep diverging identities in check. Thus, the "official" category of national identification, given expression through state rituals, political messages, and even legislation, nonetheless took on a special significance.

By the 1930s the culturally restricting national consciousness was gradually losing its official endorsement, giving way to a proposition of identity aimed at defining Hungarianness in terms of race. This demanded more than just Christian-

ity, since racial origin derived from pagan Magyar roots, to which Christianity was just a mongrel addition. This led to numerous paradoxes: Gyula Gömbös, a prominent apostle of the racial idea, had German forebears, and another fanatic, Ferenc Szálasi, Armenian.[18]

State power essentially adopted variations of the national consciousness that sought restrictions of rights. The choice of exactly which variation, and when, was guided by domestic and international affairs.

It was after the Nazi victory in Germany (1933) that the purely Christian-based Hungarian national consciousness started to lose out, being gradually replaced by the racially-based Hungarian identity, in terms of which rights were bestowed by virtue of birth and origin.

From the late 1930s it became clear that laws were being passed in Hungary depriving people of rights on racial grounds with the aim of gradually excluding one group of Hungarian citizens, the Jews, from the nation.[19] Since this arose as a racial and not a religious issue, the widely divergent complex of Jewish identities, and identities of people who had renounced their Jewishness, was reduced to a single category. It then became irrelevant whether somebody was orthodox, Neologist, converted, atheist, or any of the many other possibilities. They were just Jews – even though they had hitherto lived under the full conviction that they were Hungarians.

Standing against the reality of the disintegrated, fragmented Jews was a Hungarian national consciousness – now in a position of power – that adopted as its image of the enemy, and thus as a fundamental part of itself, the "total Jew" concept. The narrative of the "total Jew" became a cold reality, viewed with incomprehension by most Jews, for whom it was completely irrelevant to their own identity.

Those who had assimilated, had assimilated into another Hungarian national consciousness. They cited their patriotic figures, their contribution to the elevation of the Hungarian nation, their propagation of culture, and many other things. But they were addressing a national consciousness that no longer existed, at least not in the realms of power. The new, racially motivated national consciousness, relegating legal equality in the name of protection of the race, was simply deaf to the voice of the old Hungarian national consciousness.

The 1944 endgame cannot be blamed solely on the Nazi invasion. The essential mental and state preparations had already been made, and the racially-based, liberty-depriving Hungarian national consciousness was already in place. Years before the endgame, officialdom had spelled out what and how much could be taken away from the Jews, had made it acceptable to take someone's rightful property, and give it to someone else.

The Jews, clinging to the co-ordinates of traditional Hungarian national consciousness, reacted by intensifying their loyalty, their respect for the law, and

thereby their own defencelessness, since anything that could have made them eligible for being regarded as the enemy was completely absent from their own identity.[20]

The racial, disenfranchising Hungarian national consciousness was now experiencing unbroken victory. The scope of life for Jews narrowed, they were deprived of everything that had been theirs, including, for many, life itself. It counted for little whether one was an Olympic champion, an eminent scholar of Hungarian literature, a great poet, or a law-abiding citizen. Whoever you were, equality under the law was replaced by the equality of destruction.[21]

Beyond Jew and Hungarian – the Spectre of Communism

The Holocaust brought unparalleled destruction. Some forms of Jewish identity lost much of their pre-genocide sociological weight within the Hungarian Jewish community through sheer physical elimination. Such was orthodoxy, which had been strong in some parts of the country outside Budapest. Since the vast majority of non-Budapest Jews were liquidated, it effectively vanished.[22]

At the same time the Holocaust created a unifying experience for very diverse identities, a common history. This common history herded together those who had long been far apart from each other. It could also be said that whereas anti-Semitism could be lived with, got round, or got over, the Holocaust did not permit this avoidance behaviour and attitude. The words of racially-based anti-Semitism became final and total acts, and the acts could not be ignored. In the logic of the events of the Holocaust, identity became worthless, giving way to an inexorable common history and shared suffering.

Nonetheless, the Holocaust did not change the historical nature of the disintegrated Jewish identity. At most it altered the internal proportions. The anti-Semitic logic of the "total Jew," even though it took the lives of hundreds of thousands in Hungary, did not come out victorious in the history of identity. Some Jews who survived, having in many cases lost their families, left the country and – out of conviction, need, or for emotional reasons – chose the Zionist solution and became Israelis. Some left the country for countries other than the newly-forming Israel. They could no longer live here, but that did not mean they broke from their Hungarian identities. The Neologist consciousness also remained, but its adherents were much reduced in number and dwindled even further under the later pressure of state secularisation. Many also chose Christianity. And there also remained that other established route out of Jewishness, class-based identity. The latter also became spectacularly articulable, since the formation of the Communist system reduced or eliminated the opportunity for expressing other identities. The suppression and obscuration of alternative forms of consciousness was a special

feature of the Communist system – one of the reasons it is referred to as a dictatorship – and was not restricted to Jewish self-expression. This all meant that old self-definitions of Jewish identity such as Hungarianness, in the forms of minor property owner, petit bourgeois or grand bourgeois, could not appear publicly, but they still existed and lived on in the ritual of private lives.

However, for those seeking a way to cast off their Jewishness, communist-socialist identity meant more than just another familiar option, even if it had already existed before the war. To abandon Jewishness was now an act supported and promoted by the authorities. It should be re-emphasised here that a commitment to class-based and universal self-identification, if consistently pursued, meant abandoning any form of Jewish identity.

Taking such a step was influenced by both repulsion and attraction: repulsion from retaining any aspect of Jewishness and attraction to class-based Communist identity with its negligible national content. The repulsive forces fed on the weakness of existing bonds, the lack of comfort offered by Jewish spirituality for the radical stigmatisation and disadvantage experienced during the Holocaust, the failure of any Hungarian form of Jewish identity to provide a relevant response, and the reduction of Jewishness in direct memory to no more than shared suffering. The attraction was that Communism at least promised to overcome anti-Semitism, so that nobody would be suppressed, a new, fully-fledged identity, a kind of worldly religion.[23]

The attraction of Communism was not confined to Jews of assorted backgrounds. But the motivation for post-Holocaust Jews to identify with Communism stemmed from more than the promise that the Communist order would overcome anti-Semitism. What was on offer was a world-view in which anti-Semites themselves, and the perpetrators of the Holocaust themselves, were held up as the principal enemies. Nazis, fascists, whatever they were called, were fixed as the antithesis of Communist identity. Of course, there were internal dissonances. The dissonances did not in the main derive from an identification of the strong similarities between Nazi and Communist methods and ways of thinking. The ideal of "class war" and the savagery of the war had obscured these, or at least made them subject to argument. The strength of emotional and political legitimisation of the struggle against the "evil class enemy" and the Nazi brute proved powerful enough to keep the doubts at bay. A much bigger problem was that in the model country of socialism, the Soviet Union, anti-Semitism had been incorporated into official policy. However, anti-Semitism was a much lesser part of socialist politics in Hungary than in the Soviet Union, and identity did not become so detached from experience, which is perhaps why the socio-psychological phenomenon of cognitive dissonance did not occur so strongly here. The conception that Communist identity held up anti-Semitism as the image of the enemy could thus be more or less sustained.

However, there was one factor that made the choice of Communist identity easier for those who had a national identity, in this case a Hungarian national identity. Communism in Hungary – despite stereotypes to the contrary – set out to assert its power by means of vigorous national propaganda,[24] although the emphasis and strength of the national rhetoric changed its nature somewhat during the socialist period. It is undoubtedly true that the "national" world-view was highly selective, containing only what proved currently useful for socialist ideology. In general, two elements were highlighted: one was the "progressive" aspect of national history, and the other was the aspect of independence. It might be summed up by saying that the more authoritarian the system became, the more it promoted insurgents as its precursors; the less independent the country, the more it touted the historical personalities of independence. However, the desire for identification was little moved by such paradoxes. After all, every religious world-view had always carried with it irresolvable contradictions. So now those Jews who had survived assimilation, had a Hungarian consciousness, naturally treated anti-Semitism as the enemy, and became the potential and actual subjects of Communist identity.

People whose Jewishness retained a religious meaning, or to whom middle-class lifestyle and personal property were important, naturally enough regarded Communism not so much as an attraction but as a development from which to distance themselves.

The reaction of each individual was thus a combination of these repulsions and attractions. Some became party members to avoid trouble, more as a "tribute" paid to the dictatorship than identification with it. With racially-based deportation out of the way, some nonetheless found themselves sitting on a train again, this time the victims of their class situation.[25] But there were some who adopted Communist identity with faith and identification, and it was a matter of chance, or the strength of character, whether they became propagandists of the new faith, or its inquisitors.

So it was not to avenge the Jews that they took this step but to escape from any kind of Jewishness, and find relief in a new identity. Vengeance for the Jews was out of the question in any case, because those retaining Jewish or Jewish-middle-class status were oppressed by the system just like everybody else. Either because they were religious or because they dared to show themselves as secular Jewish citizens.[26]

The anti-Semitic, disenfranchising Hungarian national consciousness said: it doesn't matter what you are – if I say you are a Jew, you are a Jew. Communism said: it doesn't matter what you are, if you are not a Communist, you cannot be anything else. Communist – in its aims, and for a while in practice – wanted to expunge and suppress any identities differing from it, thus forcing people into disguise or self-deception. It was to be feared, and fear is something into which one can escape.

A large section of Jews, whatever their Jewish identity, took the option of disguise. Do not talk about it, forget it, cover it up. It was something like an administratively-enforced assimilation.[27] But this applied equally to dissenting articulations of Hungarian national consciousness. As if national identity, at least formally, had dozed into some kind of "socialist patriotism."

And all the time, every identity that had entered the twentieth century was still there, sleeping, taking cover, being articulated only in the barest outlines, if at all. Life seemed to take its course along curious paths, with strange mythologies and counter-mythologies. From rabbi novice to Communist, from Communist to security policeman (AVO), from security policeman to a critical pressure-release valve within the system. Starting as a Jew, he found that everything that was Jewish had disappeared by the time he grew up. And the process sometimes went into reverse: from Jew to Communist and back to Jew again.[28] And of course there were those who lived here, beheld the spectre of Communism, and just wanted to survive.

*

In the clear air of freedom, we discovered the existence of things we had never seen, and found many things whose existence we had assumed to be mere illusions. What seemed to have disappeared was here all the time, and what was here may no longer exist.

What is with us is the past, and the need to interpret it. And interpret we must, because we have to come to terms with everything that has happened. Or if not come to terms, at least to understand, to get the past in proportion, and put it in its place.

We need all this to interpret individual lives. To interpret our utterances. To understand ourselves. Because we ourselves are the full history of identity. Everything else is just a sketch.

Notes

1 There is a substantial literature on this subject. I find the most useful for appraising the background and the process Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto. The Century of Jewish Emancipation, 1770–1870* (Budapest: MTA Jewish Studies Group, 1995), (originally published in English in 1973); and by the same author – particularly for its Hungarian features: *Final Break. How Orthodoxy Split from the Jewish Religious Community in Hungary and Germany* (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő Kiadó, 1999) (originally published in Hebrew).

2 For the wider historical context: William O. McCagg, *A History of the Habsburg Jews* (Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1992) (originally published in English in 1989). Sketchier, but with a wider scope is Nathaniel Katzburg, *Chapters from Modern Jewish History in Hungary* (Budapest:

Hungarian Academy of Sciences [HAS] Jewish Studies Group, Osiris Kiadó 1999) (originally written in Hebrew in 1975).

3 The developments of the Reform Era are dealt with very subtly, via a particular area – education – by Viktória Bányai: *Jewish Education in Hungary 1780–1850.* PhD thesis, Budapest-ELTE 2001 (manuscript). On the role of Hungarian national consciousness, András Gerő, "Jewish Roads within Hungarian Bounds in the 19th Century", in *Magyar Polgárosodás* (Budapest: Atlantisz, 1993), 295–318. On the 1848/49 situation, Béla Bernstein: *The 1848 Hungarian War of Independence and the Jews* (Budapest, 1898) (Reprinted by Múlt és Jövő Kiadó in 1998); *1848–1849 in the Life of the Hungarian Jews,* ed. Jenő Zsoldos (Budapest, 1948) (Reprinted by Múlt és Jövő Kiadó in 1998). The fullest treatment of the emancipation: Ambrus Miskolczy, *Jewish Emancipation in Hungary in 1849* (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő Kiadó, 1999).

4 Viktor Karády has made the widest studies of Jewish secularisation and modernisation in recent years. His works have appeared in ever greater numbers. He mainly uses quantification methods. I found particularly useful: Viktor Karády, *Jews and Social Inequalities (1867–1945)* (Budapest: Replika, 2000).

5 Essential for an understanding of turn-of-the-century affairs: Péter Hanák, *The Garden and the Workshop* (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 1988); Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-siecle Vienna. Politics and Culture* (Budapest: Helikon, 1998) (Originally published in English in 1961); Steven Beller, *Vienna and the Jews 1867–1938. A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Gábor Vermes, *István Tisza* (Budapest: Századvég Kiadó, 1994). The turn-of-the-century changes are treated by John W. Boyer's two monographs: *Political Radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna. Origins of the Christian Social Movement 1848–1897* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1981), and the sequel: *Culture and Political Crisis in Vienna. Christian Socialism in Power 1897–1918* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995); Brigitte Hamann, *Vienna and Hitler. Formative Years of a Dictator* (Budapest: Európa Könyvkiadó, 2000) (Originally published in German in 1996).

6 These phenomena and the associated attitudes are well illustrated in: Lajos Venetiáner, *History of the Hungarian Jews from the Conquest to the Outbreak of the Great War, with Particular Regard to Economic and Cultural Development* (Budapest: Fővárosi Nyomda Rt., 1922) which was republished in an abridged form in 1986 by Könyvértékesítő Vállalat.

7 An attempt at a thorough review of anti-Semitism and its variations is: András Kovács, ed., *Anti-Semitism* (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 2000).

8 The most easily accessible treatment in Hungarian is Zoltán Halász, *Herzl* (Budapest: Magyar Világ Kiadó, 1995). It does not meet the criteria of an academic work, but gives a good account of how the originally assimilative consciousness transformed into a Jewish national outlook.

9 The limits to the spread of Zionism are revealed by several approaches. To understand the limits of its influence see: "Jews in Budapest" *Budapesti Negyed* (1995/summer, no. 8); and Kinga Frojimovics, Géza Komoróczy, Viktória Pantai, and Andrea Strbik, *Jewish Budapest. Memories, Rituals, History* (Budapest: Városháza, Hungarian Academy of Sciences [HAS] Centre for Jewish Studies, 1995).

10 A good illustration of the attitude outlined here is the journal *Egyenlőség* [Equality]. See Lajos Szabolcsi: *Two Lifetimes. The Decades of Equality 1881–1931.* Recollections and Documents with a Preface by Miklós Szabolcsi (Budapest: HAS Centre for Jewish Studies, 1993).

11 I am referring to one of the most striking careers of assimilation of the age, and its conclusion: Henrik Marczali and his "affair". Henrik Marczali, *Memoirs* (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő Kiadó, 2000), and Judit Bíró, The Singer-Marczali Affair, in *Scandals in Hungarian Public Life, 1843–1991*, compiled by András Gerő (Budapest: T-Twins Kiadó, 1993), 117–136.

12 There is an enormous number of sources and an extensive literature on the formation and character of Hungarian national consciousness. For the sake of simplicity, I mention here only one,

which is both a treatment and a source, since it contains studies by greatest authorities and the words of contemporaries. The series published in 1998 by Új Mandátum under the title *Hungarian Liberals.* The twelve volumes give a thorough picture of liberal Hungarian national identity.

[13] The mood of 48/49 is in my judgement best expressed by the first comprehensive treatment, whose author was also a participant: Mihály Horváth, *The History of Hungary's Fight for Freedom in 1848 and 1849* (Geneva: Miklós Puky, 1865).

[14] The "internal enemy" is not intended here to mean open social oppositions, since social conflict is in a sense a constant element in the history of communities, even if the concept of society in the modern sense only came into being in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Here it clearly means the perceived internal enemy of the "nation." On the anti-Semitic party of the time see: Judit Kubinszky, *Political Anti-Semitism in Hungary, 1875–1890* (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1976).

[15] The Catholic People's Party, of considerable importance in understanding some utterances of the Horthy era – and some even nowadays – attracts relatively little attention from writers of Hungarian history. The best work in this area is a dissertation by Dániel Szabó, only a manuscript to my knowledge. There are several references to the People's Party and its ideology in Miklós Szabó's political and historical essays, Miklós Szabó, *Legacy of the Mummies* (Budapest: Új Mandátum Könyvkiadó, 1995).

[16] Social-based enemy-formation came to the forefront on both the left and the right. The logic that stamped the social democrats and the radicals as "anti-national" was firstly an ideology setting out to overthrow the "class structure" and secondly a central element of the discourse.

[17] On this see Ignác Romsics, *The History of Hungary in the 20th Century* (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 1999). A slightly different emphasis is given in Jenő Gergely and Lajos Izsák, *The History of the Twentieth Century* (Budapest: Pannonica Kiadó, 2000).

[18] Jenő Gergely, *Gyula Gömbös. Political Career* (Budapest: Vince Kiadó, 2001) and László Karsai, "Ferenc Szálasi" in *Reformists and Radicals in Hungary,* ed. Ferenc Glatz (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990).

[19] A documentation of racially-based legislation: *Jewish Acts and Decrees in Hungary 1938–1945,* compiled by Róbert Vértes (Budapest: Polgár Kiadó. 1997). Thanks are due here to Krisztián Ungváry for permitting me to read his manuscript on the intellectual run-up to the expropriation of the Jews. A contribution to thinking on the background to the legislation: Ervin Csizmadia, *János Makkai* (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 2001).

[20] Highly enlightening as regards identity history, Sándor Tibor, *After the Change of the Guard. The Jewish Question and Film Policy 1938–1944* (Budapest: Hungarian Film Institute, 1997); Mária Schmidt: *Collaboration or Cooperation? The Budapest Jewish Council* (Budapest: Minerva, 1990); and János Hoffman, *Curtain of Mist. Notes of a Jewish Citizen 1940–1944* (Szombathely, 2001).

[21] The classic work on the subject is Randolph L. Braham, *The Hungarian Holocaust,* vols I–II, (Budapest: Gondolat, 1988) (originally published in English in 1981). The question is put into a European context in: László Karsai, *Holocaust* (Budapest: Pannonica Kiadó, 2001). I should note that the destruction of legal safeguards brought about by the policies of disenfranchisement and genocide, bathed as they were in anti-Communist rhetoric, opened the way for the Communist policies of expropriation and deprivation of legal rights. There is an implicit reference to this in István Bibó's work, *The Jewish Question in Hungary after 1944.*

[22] Unfortunately, for several reasons the subject of the Hungarian Jews and Jewish identity in all its forms in the post-war period has been comparatively neglected. There are many blank spots and very little thorough research, although the political transition brought some welcome developments. On religious life and the intellectual life surrounding religion in the post-war pe-

riod: László Csorba, "Israelite Sects in Hungary from the Age of Peril to the Nineteen Eighties," and Györgyi Tamási, "Jewish Intellectual Life in Hungary after 1945", in *Seven Decades in the Life of the Hungarian Jews,* vols. I–II (Budapest: HAS Institute of Philosophy, 1990), vol. II, 61–300. (The other contributions in these books, covering earlier periods, are also well worth reading.) János Gyurgyák's wide-ranging book, containing a lot of data, *The Jewish Question in Hungary. The History of Political Concepts* (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2001) only covers the post-1945 era in the "Epilogue". Tamás Ungvári: *Ahasvérus and Shylock: the Jewish Question in Hungary* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1999) deals more with post-transition debates than affairs after 1945.

[23] Also not to be neglected are the instances of Jewish persecution even after the war. See: János Pelle, *The last Blood Libels. The History of Ethnic Enmity and Political Manipulation in Eastern Europe* (Budapest: Pelikán Kiadó, 1995).

[24] I have dealt with this problem in another book: András Gerő, *The Nationalised Revolution. The Centenary of 1848* (Budapest: Új Mandátum Kiadó, 1998).

[25] An interesting view of this is given by the Gulyás brothers' documentary film on the relocations.

[26] The formation of secular Jewish consciousness merits study of its own, since both the secular socialist world and the resolutely anti-Israeli Communist propaganda were both involved in its creation. This form of Jewish identity became especially visible following the political transition, although its precedents had already appeared in the discourse, in urban folklore and in dedicated samizdat publications.

[27] On these issues see contributions by Ferenc Erős, András Kovács, Judit Mészáros, and Katalin Pető in *Jewishness, Identity, History,* eds.: M. Mária Kovács, Yitzhak M. Kashti, and Ferenc Erős (Budapest: T-Twins, 1992). For another – a literary – approach to the problem, see Iván Sanders, "Advanced Metacommunication. The Jewish Reading of Péter Nádas' book 'Memoirs'", in *The Boundary and the Bounded. Thoughts on Forms of Hungarian-Jewish Literature,* ed. Petra Török (Budapest: National Rabbi Training Institute, Yahalom Jewish Cultural History Research Group, 1997).

[28] In this sense, István Szabó's film *The Taste of Sunshine* is pure history of identity. One of the strengths of the film is the demonstration that the horrors of Communism do not exonerate what gave rise to Communism.

THE POST-WAR REFORMED CHURCH IN FACE OF THE HOLOCAUST

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Christian churches both Catholic and Protestant experienced a renewal of their theology and a revival of their impact on society in the interwar period; and they could count on the continuous good will of the conservative Horthy regime. Convinced that the leading role of Jewish intellectuals in the 1918–1919 revolutionary upheaval resulted the near ruin of the traditional society and amidst the shock caused by the collapse of historical Hungary, some leading members of Protestant churches endorsed various forms of political anti-Semitism, including the acceptance of some type of curtailment of religious equality, which had once been acclaimed as a significant achievement of nineteenth-century Protestant liberalism. While maintaining their sympathy for the Horthy regime till the very last, the leaders of the churches opposed the persecution and deportation of Hungarian Jews, which began escalating after March 1944. This paper will discuss some of the possible contexts of the Reformed Church's public statements concerning the Holocaust after 1945 and will focus mainly on the writings and sermons of the leading figure of the Reformed Church Bishop László Ravasz (1882–1975).

Keywords: Protestantism, anti-Semitism, Reformed Church, theology, Hungarian history after 1945, László Ravasz

The intent of this paper is to explore some aspects of the Christian attitudes towards the Holocaust in postwar Hungary. Christian churches both Catholic and Protestant experienced a renewal of their theology and a revival of their impact on society during the interwar period and they could count on the continuous good will of the Horthy regime, which vacillated between liberal-conservative and marked authoritarian tendencies throughout the whole period. Convinced that the leading role of Jewish intellectuals in the 1918–1919 revolutionary upheaval had resulted the near ruin of traditional society and amidst the shock caused by the collapse of historical Hungary, some leaders of Protestant churches endorsed various forms of political anti-Semitism, including an acceptance of some forms of the curtailment of religious equality, which had once been acclaimed as a very significant achievement of nineteenth-century Protestant liberalism. While maintaining

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The paper will discuss some of the possible contexts of the Reformed Church's public statements concerning the Holocaust after 1945, focusing mainly on the writings and sermons of the leading figure of the Reformed Church Bishop László Ravasz (1882–1975).

Although there is a sizeable international literature on the Christian pronouncements on the Holocaust there has been little written so far about the relationship between Christian churches and the Hungarian Holocaust, apart from a growing amount of journalistic or pamphleatry output. Those few scholarly works on the subject either focus on the question of responsibility and the lack of confrontation with a painful past of Christian anti-Semitism or try to justify the actions and declarations of the Christian churches in a more or less apologetic way. Arguably both types of scholarship can mobilize strong moral consciousness, yet in this phase of the research one might examine the possibility of a limited exegesis, which will not claim to find a *via media* among the many different claims of truth and will leave the task of forming a moral, ethical or political judgement to theologians and political scientists. In the following I will try to examine some possible contexts of the Reformed Church's public statements concerning the Holocaust after 1945.

In the first place one may interpret as of primary importance the context which arose from the highly problematic process of the Reformed Church's accommodation with the social and political structures, which came into existence after the watershed date of 1945. The elements of this were: 1. the ambivalent political and intellectual character of the popular democracy, which ultimately turned into the totalitarian communist dictatorship,[1] but especially in the beginning appeared as a promising debut of real, if not unlimited, pluralism; 2. the hardening communist position *vis-à-vis* the churches.

The political and intellectual climate formed by the popular democracy included what in the common parlance of the day was still labeled as the 'Jewish question' after 1945. The highly conflicted political atmosphere produced various reactions to the phenomenon that contemporaries called "neo-anti-Semitism"[2] during 1945–1946, which wavered between suppression, political tactics and on rare occasions open speech. Jews returning from the death-camps and labor service, or liberated from the horrors of the ghetto, had alternatives at their disposal, which neither alleviated the efforts to cope with their tragedy nor did they make the difficult ways of reconciliation easier. The choices of the remnant Jews reflected the former divisions of the prewar Jewish community. Zionism strengthened considerably and introspective religiosity also gained terrain[3] but the most attractive option remained the thorny way of assimilation, despite the "fateless-

ness" experienced during the Holocaust, and all the more so since the more religious orthodox and the younger generation of Zionists would leave for Israel in the coming years. A new and increasingly appealing form of assimilation was offered by communism, which augured an era of universal brotherhood, a new and powerful identity based on communist messianism,[4] and offered at the same time a quiet practical inducement of opportunities and positions in those spheres of the state and political power from which Jews had previously been excluded. This has produced yet a new type of vicious cycle, since communism in practice meant entry into the service of Stalinism, and it consequently risked separation from the greater part of Hungarian society. Furthermore, the positions in the political police and summary courts exposed the Jews as a whole to the accusation of a "Jewish revenge".[5] In any event, for most who assumed a communist identity out of sincere commitment this choice proved to be an absolute impasse in the long run as long as it required the suppression of Jewish identity and forced silence instead of a genuine discussion about the trauma of the Holocaust and the roads leading to it. The Marxist approach, which linked anti-Semitism to high-finance and bourgeois capitalism, offered solution to the Jewish drama in an unconditional identification with the cause of socialism. This view became by 1949 the only available interpretation of the Holocaust and placed other discourses under taboo. Even a new vocabulary had been fashioned. Instead of the persecution of the Jews one needed to speak about the victims of fascism in general, since the antagonism of fascism and democracy was the only way to interpret history.

Another problem came from the fact that for a substantial proportion of Hungarian society 1945 had hardly been an opportunity for a new start but constituted a new catastrophe and a brutal colonization. According to this view, the frustrated anger and anxious expectations of the interwar period and its main feature consisting primarily of the revision of the Treaty of Trianon and the restoration of the country's lost territorial integrity continued to be seen as heroic attempts to regenerate a pillaged and humiliated nation despite the ban and stigma against such beliefs after 1945. This irreflexive position coupled with the abuses of the postwar purges disposed many to identify communism simply with Jewish dominance and the growing terror with Jewish vengeance. Nor has the division within the non-communist left been redressed. Urbanist writers bluntly stated that the folkish writers disqualified themselves as a block from Hungarian intellectual life because of their anti-Semitic rhetoric before the war. In the absence of operating forums of a free debate the folkish writers could retain some of their position only because of the protection of the Communist Party.[6] István Bibó's famous work on the Jewish question after 1944 was the most nuanced effort to deal with the problem of anti-Semitism *and* Jewish Hungarian coexistence.[7] Although some critics say that he over politicized his concepts on the basis of his feeling of guilt, which could not prevent the distortion of his sense of reality. Bibó's insights are still rele-

vant for many scholars of anti-Semitism studies.[8] In any case the essay in the last issue of the periodical *Válasz* came too late in 1948 to introduce a serious debate on the topic.

How have the various statements made by the Reformed Church been influenced or distorted by fear, self-justification, and internal power struggle stemming from the uneasy situation of the church after 1945?

The Christian churches, although exposed to increasing harassment and severe curtailment of their associative activities, were able to preserve a considerable part of their autonomy up to 1948. It seems plausible to argue that the churches remained the most unregimented parts of a shrinking civil society until the complete communist take over.[9] The Protestant churches unlike the wealthy Catholic Church did not have much to lose with the land reform. The most influential Communist party-leader Mátyás Rákosi several times spoke positively of the much exaggerated but highly symbolic connection between opposition minded Protestantism and the progressive tradition of freedom fighting as opposed to the clerical reaction of the Catholic Church, which was supposed to always lend its support to feudal repression. Of course Rákosi never lost an opportunity to complain about the treacherous turn of the contemporary Protestantism, which had embraced the feudal-capitalist reaction of István Tisza and Miklós Horthy. Nevertheless some of the most respected leaders of the Reformed Church, who had had strong personal ties and often expressed sympathies with the previous interwar establishment, hoped to reinvigourate the century old liberal dream of a "free church in a free state." At the same time they did penance and urged for spiritual renewal and for a new reformation. The social history of the religious life of the post-1945 era is largely unchartered territory but these impulses found fertile ground since there were clear signs that the movements of spiritual renewal of the post-1920 period had emerged with rejuvenated force forming a valuable reservoir for the faithful against forced secularization up until the 1960s. One aspect of these movements was constituted by those numerous public statements, sermons and declarations that stressed the church's own responsibility as the accredited dispenser of Christ's teaching in this world for what it failed to do for the prevention of the frightful cruelties and gruesome mass-murders:

> In the name of the Synod of the Hungarian Reformed Church the Synodal Council by deeply humiliating herself confesses her sins with which she has offended the Divine Majesty of God. She has sinned by not fulfilling her office of Prophecy. She has failed to prevent the people and the superiors from choosing paths opposing the Laws of God, and she had not stood with full courage for the Persecuted.[10]

But the program of self-examination and renewal suffered from the beginning from some serious encumbrances. These declarations, regardless of what motivated them, could not avoid being interpreted through the ever changing and polarizing definitions of democracy and fascism. This context of growing uncertainty along with the problem of the continuity of the leadership, albeit based on the support of the overwhelming majority of church members, created an atmosphere where penance could at best be seen as an awkward attempt to change sides.[11]

Hence the illusions invested in the hope of a new foundation for church-state relations rapidly came to naught. Abuses of power, arbitrary interments, show trials – including those of many Protestant leaders – the narrowing scope of political freedom, and the more and more aggressive Communist behavior awakened them to the harsh reality of a totalitarian reality. In 1946 a group of radical pastors held a conference in Nyíregyháza and formed a Free Council which issued a programatic declaration, which among other things apologized to the decimated Jewish community in much the same language as the earlier ones. In itself this formed another station of the self-examination process – that was István Bibó's interpretation; but since its main motivation was to challenge the authority of all elected officials of the church on the basis of their conservatism the reply was a highly irritatable refusal from the larger part of the Protestant public.[12] The split in the ranks was avoided, and the Free Council disintegrated but the reconciliation process suffered a mortal blow in the eyes of everyone. In 1949 when all of the leading positions in the Reformed Church were taken over by the authors of the Free Council, thanks to the intervention of the Communist Party, the Presidium of the Synod of the Reformed Church approved the dismantling of the International Hebrew-Christian Association, which was an organ of the Jewish Christian dialogue, and argued that the new regime of democracy "completed as fully as possible the process of reparation of the persecuted..."[13]

The reactions of the Protestant public and the attitude of mutual distrust and irritation had an important background, which was provided by the multifaceted religious development of the interwar era and the Reformed Church's relationship to the Horthy-regime. It is a commonplace that this relationship was extremely cordial. The state supported the church by every means, and the church provided loyalty and a friendly attitude. The consensus was based on the mutual condemnation of the 1918–1919 revolutions and on the need for protection of the traditional social order. But this alone is not sufficient to explain the regeneration the churches experienced after 1920. The strengthening of missionary activity and an enthusiastic embrace of new forms of propagation and the reinforcement of religious observance were all signs of a Hungarian version of a "second confessionalization,"[14] which repudiated the old fashioned nineteenth-century Protestant liberal synthesis, which had combined the concepts of nation and progress. At the

same time it was not insensitive to the need for a comprehensive social reform, which nevertheless remained a second priority behind the desire for a restoration of the borders of historical Hungary.[15] The Catholic-Protestant relationship also remained far from unambiguous. But behind the spectacular instances of conflict and sometimes comical rivalry over preeminence a new commencement was at work. An ecumenical rapprochement initiated by some of the most eminent Catholic and Protestant theologians emerged as part of a need for unity against the most highly feared bolshevism and against the new paganism represented by Nazism.[16] The ecumenism on behalf of Protestantism was invoked on the basis of a conservative neo-Kantian axiology, which recognized a plurality of values in the face of a highly conflicting and competitive past.[17] This resulted a new assessment of the Reformation. It is true that all these efforts had not prevented a failure in 1944 to make a common stand against the deportations; nevertheless even though one can argue in retrospect that the very act of the attempt by the Reformed Church based on the Christian solidarity was a sign of new times. After 1945 Cardinal Mindszenty's intransigence had a large impact and created a very strong mobilizing force that dominated the attitude of the religious toward the new regime. Many Protestants regarded Mindszenty as an authentic figure of the resistance of a humiliated nation, even though some, who were otherwise sympathetic to his motivation, feared that a new 'Counter Reformation' was at hand.[18]

The Catholic Church had a different approach toward the problem of postwar anti-Semitism. It recognized anti-Semitism as a real problem and as destructive force but thought herself immune to its chimera, both in the past and the present. Characteristic is Bishop Endre Hamvas' declaration that "those who committed the crimes were not Christians; but the Jews had been working against the Christians for fifty years."[19] And Hamvas was among the few who had taken real measures for saving the lives of the persecuted during the Holocaust. All in all the Catholic Church, the most dynamic force against the growing Communist power and the most widely respected social institution of Hungary, had not attempted to face the resurgence of anti-Semitism nor did the church feel the necessity of self-examination in regard to the Christian aspects of the anti-Semitic legacy. (Albeit this refusal occurred against a backdrop of a triumphalist attitude and an awareness that the evaluation of all social and political problems, anti-Semitism being no exception, had been narrowed down to the fascist/democratic dichotomy set up by the Communist Party.)[20]

The most complex and least analyzed aspect of the issue under consideration is the theological background of the Jewish-Protestant relationship. The Reformed Church had always cultivated the tradition of persecution and the righteousness of the suppressed minority as an essential part of its identity, and as late as the nineteenth century had drawn parallels between the tribulations of Israel and the sufferings of the Protestants. This idea was also a constituent part of the movement

for emancipation which was enthusiastically supported by nineteenth-century Protestant liberalism.

After 1920 this liberalism faded away and gave place to a neo-orthodox return to the Reformers theology. Central to this new movement was the idea of the Mission through the institutionalization of revivalist tendencies. This lent a new momentum for the mission to the Jews, which for obvious theological reasons was considered as a very special and highly important issue. The tension between missionary conscience and the program of tolerance can amply be illustrated by numerous post-1945 statements, which all agreed that the most serious failure of the Protestants had been their lukewarm efforts to convert the Jews. "Evangelical Churches must admit that, misled by a false sense of tolerance, they failed to let the light of Evangelical Christianity make its force felt in the community of Jews."[21] Against objections raised by Jewish observers Bereczky insisted that giving up the missionary effort would mean "to cast the Jews out of the universal human solidarity."[22]

Yet the impact of post-1920s political anti-Semitism was even more serious. Protestant bishops endorsed by their vote both the first and the second Anti-Jewish law. True they cast their ballot for the first out of conviction and for the second out of political constraint. Furthermore, the newer and more and more racial versions of the anti-Jewish legislation encountered the bitter disapproval of the Christian churches because they concerned a substantial number of their own Christian faithful.

Most critics say that the churches faced a "status confessionis" during the deportations and the Holocaust of 1944, and their firmness and moral courage was far less than could be expected.[23] Their attitude displayed hardly more than a passive resistance, and most importantly churches recoiled from breaking with the state, which had institutionalized the persecution. The steps that they had made were far more motivated by the fear of a postwar calling to account, than by any genuine compassion and sense of responsibility. *Yet* it had been László Ravasz, who despite his well-known anti-Judaism had deployed the most energy to stop the persecutions.[24] Ravasz, an unquestionable authority far beyond the Protestant churches, was the same leader who formulated most of the postwar public statements of the church on these matters. In the remaining part of my paper I will try to explore some aspects of the paradox of this position. In doing so I will reject all explanations that attribute primarily to political reasons either his endorsement of the anti-Jewish legislation or the statements he made after 1945.[25]

There is a revealing story in Ravasz's *Memoirs*. When he was a schoolboy, he had mocked one of his classmates, a poor Jewish boy, who then complained about the insult to Ravasz' father, the schoolmaster. His father then forbade Ravasz to eat with the family until he had apologized publicly the Jewish boy. In order to facilitate the apology Ravasz' father speaks to him in detail about the misery and

struggles of the offended boy.[26] The story reveals much about the late 1880s, when Hungarian liberalism victoriously overcame the anti-Semitism that had been revived by the Tiszaeszlár blood libel case. I tend to see this story not as another expression of the all too well-known paternalistic attitude of nineteenth-century gentry liberalism but rather as a telling example of the more puritan pathos of Transylvanian liberalism. Ravasz' spiritual journey departed from the spirit of this emancipatory liberalism via a theologically justified ethnic nationalism, which eventually came to oppose racist persecution and ended in a predestination minded mortification and penance. This was a journey that he never pretended to see as an uninterrupted or unequivocal human achievement.

Until approximately 1910 Ravasz professed the values of classical liberalism, showed great enthusiasm for the poetry of Endre Ady, and became a freemason. Nevertheless, beginning with the early 1910s he went through a double process of conversion. His religiosity deepened and he became a conservative thinker. One has to admit that even in Ravasz's narrative the two processes were not necessarily intimately linked. But, as he put it in 1960, irrespective of the progressive tradition of Protestant liberalism he had felt a fatal either/or dilemma and the undermining of all traditional values in the wake of a radical attack on religion and the historical past.[27] This pushed him to an anxious awareness of the menace, and as a way out he turned to a reformulation of the religious foundations of Protestantism rooted in Calvin's doctrine of election and predestination. This shift reminds me to the functional explanation of the doctrine of predestination by the late Heiko A. Oberman.[28] Oberman recognized the attractiveness of this grim vision of the world in the existential situation of the defeated. Predestination is the core teaching of the Reformation of the Refugees. The dynamics of an imminent destruction found a tremendous assurance in the absolutness of the divine sovereignty. As might be expected this doctrine concedes almost nothing to human endeavors and consequently deprives the concept of progress of whatever positive value it could hold. On the other hand it fosters a highly dichotomous and stereotyping anthropology of history and social interactions.

In my opinion this view influenced a great deal of Ravasz' statements on the so called Jewish question, which nonetheless were not exempt from fluctuations. In 1917 he still held the view that it was a social and pedagogical problem and there was no other solution to be offered to the Jews but a way of assimilation to the ideals of the Hungarian soul. Whereas he spotted a major obstacle of the assimilation process in the attitude and the poor spiritual state of the Hungarians, yet he demanded from the Jews an unconditional identification with the ideals so badly exhibited by the Hungarians.[29]

In the interwar period he further advanced the theological aspects of the spiritual mission at the expense of the cultural ones but at the same time he deplored the expanding number of conversions, which were only for the sake of assimila-

tion, and stressed that not everyone was given the grace of election even within the church. But election can also work outside the visible Church. In that respect he acknowledged Zionism as an alternative but he had no other message for the secularized Jews than to embrace the Christian ethics of the majority. As to the problem of anti-Semitism, he was aware of the injustice of a phenomenon that is by its very constitution bad tempered but still diagnosed the core of anti-Semitism in the "otherness" of the Jewish spirit. The proposed solution of Ravasz was a simultaneous return of the Jews to the penitential traditions of the Prophets of the Old Testament and a sincere and comprehensive metanoia of the prodigious Christians.[30] Nevertheless his speech in the Upper House during the deliberation of the draft of the second anti-Jewish law can be regarded as remarkably inconsistent even with his own criteria: "...the people of the Saint of Saints abandoned the idea of sanctity" thus the "Jews are other than the Hungarians in fate, in history, and in spirituality." Thus, the breach of the principle of equality on religious grounds that he approved by his own vote was an unjustified departure of the middle ground of the spiritual encounter he had envisaged. The contradictions of this view are obvious especially in the light of another writing from the same period "The Spirit of National Unity", where he conspicously omitted any allusion to the Jewish problem while enumerating the long list of the divisions within Hungarian society.[31]

What remained and what changed in Ravasz's attitude after 1944? This is particularly interesting to examine because between 1945 and 1948 all official utterances regarding this issue were initiated or worded by him. According to Ravasz, it was 'fatal' to pass the first anti-Jewish law and to abandon the principle of religious equality and the principle of democracy.[32] This is the reason why he emphasized the importance of doing penance. He recognized the irrationalizing feature of the ideology of the extreme right and acclaimed that it was fallacious for the church to be contented with the mere theoretical rejection of a national socialism instead of taking action.[33] Nonetheless Ravasz viewed history and his personal contribution to it as a fate where human wisdom was in combat with dubious options for action. In 1946 at the assembly of the National Pastoral Association of the Reformed Church (ORLE) he could not deny that the aim of revisionist politics was rightly the alpha and the omega of Hungarian history in the interwar period and that there was no way out.[34] In this respect he maintained that his own faults were tragic mistakes that he compared to the ones committed by the protagonists of Greek tragedies. Ravasz held on to his former opinion that the Jewish question was an existing problem with only eschatological solution. The conflict resulted from the sinful human nature of both of the Jews and Gentiles alike and peace will be restored only on the Day of Judgement, when Israel the eldest-born returns to Christ. Up to then the only way of assimilation for the secularized Jew would be to adopt Christian ethics. In 1960 Ravasz recollected that the period after 1945 had offered a chance for the Hungarian soul to escape from anti-Semitism,

an opportunity, however, that was missed.[35] In his last sermon in 1968 Ravasz commented the *Nostra aetate* of the Second Vatican Council, which declared that it was not the Jews who killed Jesus. "Of course not" he added. He was killed by man, the all-time, sinful man.[36]

In summation one tentative conclusion can be formulated. The problem was not so much the absence of trying to address the issue of the tragedy of the Holocaust. Rather the failure came about through the insurmountable difficulties of creating and maintaining a trustful social environment amidst the more and more aggressive spread of sovietization and the irresolvable problems of accommodation. Thus, the process of reconciliation ultimately came to be blocked in the period immediately after 1945.

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Notes

1 See Rainer, 1998, 17–45, Szakács–Zinner, 1997.

2 Standeisky, 1992, 284–308, and Pelle, 1995 stress the surviving anti-Semitism as being "the braise under the ashes"; while Apor, 1998, 602–603 reveals the significant shifts in the construction of anti-Semitism according to the logic of the new communist totalitarianism.

3 Csorba, 1990, 61–190; Novák, 2000.

4 Furet, 1999, Congdon, 2001.

[5] Varga, 1992, 62–67.

[6] Gyurgyák, 2001, 593.

[7] Bibó, 1984 [1948], 135–290.

[8] Ungváry, 2000, 48. Lugosi, 2001, 165 denies it.

[9] Gombos, 1960, 16.

[10] "A magyar református egyház zsinati tanácsa a zsinat nevében mélyen megalázkodva megvallja bűnét, amellyel Isten fölségét megsértette. Megsértette azzal, hogy a tőle vett prófétai tisztet nem teljesítette. Elmulasztotta inteni a népet és a felsőséget, amikor mindkettő Isten törvényeivel ellenkező útra tért, s nem állt ki egészen bátran az ártatlanul üldözöttek mellett." The May 9, 1946 Resolution of the Hungarian Reformed Church as quoted by Bolyki–Ladányi, 1987, 94–96, Ladányi, 1994, 3–4. This resolution along with others were almost always written by László Ravasz.

[11] See the opposing interpretation of József Éliás as quoted by Szenes, 1986, 85 and Szabó, 2001, 85, 137.

[12] See Kiss, 2003b on Free Council and its connection with Security Services.

[13] Letter of Councellor Pálfy to Bishop Albert Bereczky on October 5, 1949 as quoted by Ladányi, 1994, 29.

[14] Blaschke, 1999, 38–75.

[15] Kósa, 2000, 203–210.

[16] Giczi, 1999, 65–84.

[17] Ravasz, 1938, I, 505–507.

[18] Szabó Imre, 2001, 423–424.

[19] Beke, 1996, 315 and 290–291.

[20] Apor, 1998, 631–632.

[21] Bereczky, 1945, 5.

[22] Bereczky, 1947, 61; see also Révész, 1990 [1946], 90; Szenes, 1986, 89–90.

[23] Bibó, 1984, [1948] 155–156 and Majsai, 1984, 239.

[24] Majsai, 1995a, Majsai 1995b.

[25] Fürj, 1998, 25–35, Tóth, 2001, 282–285.

[26] Ravasz, 1992, 15–16.

[27] *Ibid,* 122–123.

[28] Oberman, 2003.

[29] Ravasz, 1917, 128–129

[30] Ravasz, 1938, III, 352.

[31] Ravasz, 1938, III, 256–268.

[32] Ravasz, 1988, 357.

[33] See Ravasz' article in the journal *Haladás* [Progress] (December 22, 1945) entitled "Védőbeszéd és vádirat" [Plea and indictment] as quoted by Kiss, 2003a.

[34] Ravasz, 1988, 73–75.

[35] Ravasz, 1988, 362.

[36] Ravasz, 1988, 348.

JEWISH THEMES AND ISSUES IN POST-1989 HUNGARIAN LITERATURE

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The essay discusses the renewed interest in Jewish subjects in post-1989 Hungary and, more specifically, popular new Hungarian fiction dealing naturalistically and anecdotally with the Hungarian Jewish experience – fiction written in most cases by "engagé" Hungarian Jewish writers. The essay also touches on the phenomenon of "de-Judaized" Hungarian Jewish literature, in which the Jewish content is masked, concealed, universalized, and with Hungarian writers of Jewish descent who object to the category of "Hungarian Jewish" literature. It is in this context that the essay deals with Imre Kertész and his works, and attempts to show that while his novels deal explicitly with the Hungarian Jewish "fate", or fatelessness, he is always intent on suggesting the universal relevance of this state of fatelessness.

Keywords: contemporay Hungarian literature, Jewish themes in literature, Holocaust in literature

After reviewing the changes in Hungarian cultural life in the past decade and a half, one could confidently conclude that one of the more conspicuous changes we have witnessed has been the renewed interest in things Jewish. Caution is in order, however. "Interest in things Jewish" is a deliberately inclusive, ambiguous and loaded formulation, for it includes not only numerous publications of Jewish interest: historical, literary, and sociological works, including penetrating, often controversial reassessments of events, issues, and problems touching on the Hungarian Jewish experience, but also a veritable flood of explicitly and most often crudely anti-Jewish writings ranging from Holocaust denials to conspiracy theories, and the warmed-up clichés of traditional, religious anti-Judaism. This type of "Jewish-related literature" made its appearance in Hungary soon after the regime change, and fifteen years later it still has a prominent place in the far right press and media. Fortunately, my topic is not this hate literature but another kind of literary revival, that of the literature dealing with Hungarian Jewry and with Jewish issues and themes in general. I would venture to say that more books of Jewish interest have been published in each of the past fifteen years than in the previous forty-year period.[1]

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If we focus now on literature, the picture isn't quite as rosy, though even here a quantitative tally would be impressive. In his rather somber and chastening postscript to an anthology of post-Holocaust Hungarian Jewish writing, published in Budapest in 1999, János Kőbányai, who as editor, publisher and writer has played a major role in making Hungarian Jewish literature past and present better known, points out that "only one tradition of dead-end Hungarian Jewish assimilation survived the great destruction, and that is the rejection of tradition".[2] And at the end of his essay, he notes, perhaps even more bitterly, that "the names of several authors that by right should be present [in such an anthology] are missing. Interestingly, paradoxically, in similar anthologies published only abroad, we encounter a very different roster of names".[3] Kőbányai is obliquely referring to the fact that while such prominent contemporary Hungarian writers of Jewish origin as Péter Nádas, Mihály Kornis, György Spiró, and Péter Lengyel have contributed to an anthology of Hungarian Jewish writing published recently in English translation by the University of Nebraska Press,[4] they did not wish to be included in the volume compiled by János Kőbányai in Budapest. (We should note that other major Hungarian writers – Imre Kertész and György Konrád – had given permission to have pieces of theirs reprinted in Kőbányai's collection.)

Why this reluctance, this selective reluctance, as we have seen, on the part of some Hungarian writers of Jewish origin to be labeled a Jewish writer, or their works to be considered a part of Jewish literature? It's an old story, of course, as old as the process of assimilation itself, in particular the assimilation of European Jews. For a number of Hungarian writers of Jewish extraction, what the poet Miklós Radnóti wrote in a by now famous letter in the early forties remains the definitive pronouncement on the subject. Radnóti's letter was addressed to Aladár Komlós, a noted critic who did believe that there is such a thing as Hungarian Jewish literature, and it was a response to a request by Komlós that Radnóti contribute poems to an anthology he then edited of works by Hungarian writers considered Jewish by the new law of the land, and who therefore found it increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to place their writings in non-Jewish Hungarian publications. Miklós Radnóti, who considered himself a Hungarian poet to the end, refused to enter a "denominational ghetto". "I never denied my Jewishness", he writes in his letter to Aladár Komlós, "but I do not feel Jewish. I was never taught to be religious, I do not feel a need for it, I don't practice it. Race, blood ties, unseverable roots, ancient pangs quivering in every fiber – I consider such things utter nonsense, and not the defining characteristic of either my intellectuality, my spirituality or my poetry. Even in the social sense I see the 'community of Jews' as a bogus designation. This has been my experience. Perhaps it isn't so, but this is how I feel, and I could never live a lie. My Jewishness has become the problem of my life, but it is circumstances, laws, the world that made it so. The problem was forced on me. Otherwise I am a Hungarian poet; my relatives I have already men-

tioned..."[5] (Earlier in the letter, Radnóti refers to two pictures hanging in his study, reproductions of portraits of János Arany and Ferenc Kazinczy, two greats of nineteenth-century Hungarian literature. Radnóti relates to Komlós that when "uninitiated" visitors, looking at the pictures, ask, "Are they relatives of yours?" he answers, "Yes, they are."[6])

A great many Hungarian literary artists of Jewish descent, perhaps the majority, still espouse Radnóti's credo, though we should stress that it is not because of a sense of shame or inferiority, a desire to gloss over certain parts of their heritage, or out of some misplaced, exaggerated nationalist feeling, that they are reluctant to consider themselves anything but Hungarian writers, and view any other designation as inappropriate, parochial, retrograde, even degrading. They insist on being only Hungarian because they have a vivid historical memory. Of course, the real culprits here are pernicious ideologies and the tragedies to which they led. There are quite a few Hungarian artists and intellectuals who, though they are too young to remember the years of persecution, are well aware of the fact that their predecessors, or family members, were herded first into symbolic and then actual ghettoes, and who therefore do not wish to enter a "denominational ghetto" voluntarily.

One might say this is not a completely satisfying explanation. After all, Hungary has been a democracy for fifteen years, and though anti-Semitism has reared its ugly head during this time, the kind of stigmatization many Hungarian Jews, not only artists, instinctively fear is a thing of the past. But we also know that the peculiarities of Hungarian Jewish assimilation, quite apart from historical traumas, have left an ambiguous legacy. Let me try to illuminate this with an example. It has been pointed out, most recently by literary historian Eva Reichmann,[7] that two histories of Hungarian literature were published almost at the same time in the late thirties: Gyula Farkas's *Az asszimiláció kora a magyar irodalomban (1867–1914)* (The Age of Assimilation in Hungarian Literature – 1867–1914) and Antal Szerb's broader *Magyar irodalomtörténet* (History of Hungarian Literature). Farkas's highly controversial book examines the work of authors active during the period in question purely from the point of view of their being assimilationists, and his conclusions are pretty devastating. He feels that Hungarian literature after 1867 declined; the Hungarian character recedes and an alien spirit takes over. The literary history of Antal Szerb, a critic and essayist of Jewish descent, who died as a forced laborer in early 1945, is thoroughly modern and European in approach, revealing the influence of the Geistesgeschichte school of criticism. For the record, Gyula Farkas's book is a historical curiosity, a period piece, which nobody reads anymore, while Szerb's *Irodalomtörténet* is still used, still delightfully readable, one of the finest works of its kind in Hungarian. Nevertheless, in one sense Szerb's book also represents an extreme position. While Farkas's interest is exclusively in the ethnic and religious origins of the authors he discusses and the effect

of these origins on their works (mostly negative in his estimation), Szerb virtually ignores this aspect and is especially silent on the subject when it comes to assimilated Hungarian Jewish writers, including those writers (József Kiss, for example) in whose works Jewish influences are not at all irrelevant. So, in a sense, we are dealing with distortion and repression on both sides. And this is the highly ambiguous tradition to which contemporary Hungarian writers are heir to.

There have been writers who responded to the challenge of this ambiguous legacy by masking, universalizing, submerging their Jewish themes; Jewishness in these works becomes a subtext that must be decoded, deconstructed, in a way. Critics have noted this tendency and have written about it. For example, in a much quoted essay aptly titled "De-Judaization in Hungarian Jewish Literature", the philosopher Ágnes Heller discusses the phenomenon with regard to three Hungarian writers: Ferenc Molnár, Tibor Déry and Péter Lengyel and comes to the conclusion that this concealment, or obfuscation, though it may stem from a degree of self-denial or even self-hate, can make a work resonant, suggestive, and of course, can also impoverish it.[8] In a literary text, oblique allusions and ambiguous hints – whether they refer to politics, religion or whatever else – can always add excitement, turn the reader into a detective, a fellow conspirator, though the feeling that something is missing is also always there. Let me illustrate with a couple of simple, even trivial examples. The *topos* of the wanderer's return to his original home is common enough in literature. In modern Hungarian literature, because of the many dislocations caused by historical upheavals, the return of the exile or emigrant to his or her native country, city is an especially common theme. Ferenc Karinthy has a short story, written in the early sixties and called "Túl az Óperencián" ("Beyond the Seven Seas"), in which an elegant, middle-class Budapest lady returns to her native city, which she left in the late nineteen-forties, and visits her former maid and her family. She is received with great cordiality by the hard-working and prospering working-class family. Their hospitality is unexceptionable, the conversation polite, though it soon falters, and after all the pleasantries have been exchanged, there is not much more to say. The social gap that had always been there seems wider now. The lady leaves the house of her former maid, tired and disappointed. "Túl az Óperencián" is a typical story of the period, yet there is a tentativeness and awkwardness not only about the story itself but also about the manner of presentation, as though the author couldn't decide what to reveal and what to withhold. We learn that before they left, she and her husband had been makers and purveyors of fine china, they have a German-sounding name, and are now comfortably settled in New York. They might be Jewish; then again they might not be. The number of things left unsaid makes Karinthy's story vague and indefinite – a torso.

Transylvanian-born Zsófia Balla's much more recent story, "A nagyapám háza" (My grandfather's house), included in János Kőbányai's previously men-

tioned anthology, is also about a return – a family from Israel paying a visit to their Transylvanian hometown after an absence of forty-nine years. In this story, nothing is glossed over: the author details the visitors' contradictory feelings about their hometown, the mixture of nostalgia and bitterness, and the locals' lingering resentment of the one-time victims whom they now see as rich Westerners throwing their weight around. Zsófia Balla's story is also modest in scope, a sketch really, but at least it's forthright and honest. We could cite a counterexample from the same collection of Hungarian Jewish stories: György Dalos's marvelous vignettes about growing up Jewish in Communist Hungary, "Anecdotes from Childhood", were first published in 1978, during the Kádár era. Wry, subtle, written with a gentle touch, these anecdotes nevertheless focus on the absurdities of life in Hungary in the early communist years, as seen by an orphaned Jewish boy who is raised by his tenacious grandmother. A sequel to these little gems, entitled "Anecdotes from Adulthood" lack the sharpness and poignancy of the earlier collection. Written in a period of far greater freedom, they are long-winded, explicit, obvious.

All this is not to say that the years of change, the fall of communism, did not have a liberating effect on Hungarians of every stripe. In her reminiscences, Ágnes Heller recalls the moment in her youth when she embraced communism and snapped out of her previous existence, forgetting about her Zionist past, her Jewish past, and also about her Hungarian self – for years she was in the thrall of an ideology. Her reawakening, her return to her roots, she says, happened early, during the 1956 Revolution; she realized then that she was both Hungarian and a Jew.[9] But it is a fact that as a thinker and writer Ágnes Heller began to rediscover Jewish literature and history only after 1989. Since then all of her books are brought out by Múlt és Jövő, the most important publisher of books on Jewish subjects in Hungary today. Her example may be exceptional and conspicuous, but it does say something important about spiritual reorientation in post-1989 Hungary. For many the historic changes meant a moment of truth; they could say and do things they hadn't dared for years. For example, the well-known psychologist and writer, Tamás Vekerdy published a slim volume entitled *Zsidó könyv* (Jewish Book) several years ago, in which more than once he writes down the simple sentence, "I am a Jew."[10] One senses the relief, the exhilaration accompanying such a public declaration. Another dramatic and cathartic utterance can be heard in a Hungarian film made in 1989, at the very cusp of the changing era. The film is *Tutajosok* (*Memories of a River* in English), made by Judit Elek and based on the famous Tiszaeszlár blood libel case. In the film's final scene, after all the defendants have been acquitted of the charge of ritual murder, the prosecution's star witness, Móric Scharf, the adolescent son of one of the accused, who (partly because he had been "prepped" by the examining magistrate, and partly because he rebelled against his authoritarian father) testified against him in open court, reject-

ing his family, his community, his faith, in a contrite but unnatural gesture kneels before his father and in very proper Hungarian begs for forgiveness. But then, in a sudden, heart-rending outburst, the boy sobs, in Yiddish, "Tate, harget mich!" (Father, kill me!), after which József Scharf lifts the boy from the kneeling position and embraces him. Now this is a fictional scene. Nothing in the available historical record shows that something like this actually took place.[11] But I cannot help feeling that this anguished outcry springs from a deep need – present in the director and perhaps in many other Hungarians of Jewish background – to atone, indeed to be punished, for allowing themselves to be duped, led astray, brainwashed into denying an important part of their being, just as the young boy was brainwashed by his handlers in what was planned by the prosecution as a kind of show trial. (The film suggests in a number of ways that the Tiszaeszlár trial prefigured the political show trials of the late 1940s and early 50s – except that in 1883 justice and reason ultimately prevailed, and the compelling arguments of a liberal Hungarian aristocrat, Károly Eötvös, succeeded in staving off the forces of unreason.)

Since the 1989 watershed Hungarian Jewish literature *has* enjoyed a kind of renaissance. For the first time in a long time works of fiction appeared about Jewish characters and Jewish life situations that didn't have to resort to indirection or coded, euphemistic language. Writers emerged in the new era who were either too young to publish before (Gábor T. Szántó), or turned to belles-lettres rather late (István Gábor Benedek), or were under publication ban before 1989 (György Dalos). Certain hitherto sensitive, painful, even taboo subjects could be treated more freely: Jewish religious life during the communist years; Jews in the communist secret police in the late forties and early fifties; collaboration between community leaders and the security apparatus. Published in the mid-to-late nineties, these works aimed at a larger readership, and some of the new writings, especially István Gábor Benedek's books, achieved considerable popularity.[12] But they *are* popular fictions, often sentimental, melodramatic, offering the reader colorful, "ethnic" characters, earthy language, and plots with unexpected twists and turns. Generally, they lack the depth, seriousness and stylistic innovations of earlier examples of Hungarian literature on Jewish themes. But readers in the nineties, it seems, were no longer interested in oblique, parabolic representations, in playing detective or reading between the lines – they were interested in anecdotal realism, which is certainly not a new tradition in Hungarian literature. It is worth noting that in the post-1989 period, the best-selling foreign Jewish writer in Hungary has been Chaim Potok, who during the communist era was not published in Budapest, probably because he was considered "too Jewish", but also because he wasn't deemed literary enough. During the same period many works by such renowned American Jewish authors as Saul Below and Bernard Malamud were

published in Hungary – works which, in the fifties and sixties at least, were seen both in this country and abroad as the best that American literature had to offer.

The family novel has been seen as a particularly suitable genre for conveying the Hungarian Jewish experience, if only because it is a story of rather rapid assimilation through several generations. We need only think of works by Tamás Kóbor, Lajos Hatvany, András Komor, Károly Pap, Illés Kaczér to realize that the ups and downs of Hungarian Jewish history have been told, to a large extent, through family novels. In recent decades, a new generation of writers produced post-Holocaust examples of family or generation novels, but these, as Rita Horváth, a student of the genre points out, are attenuated, fragmented versions with mythic beginnings, abrupt breaks, and uncertain endings.[13] This trend continued in the nineties, and even in the more popular kind of Hungarian Jewish fiction referred to earlier we get brief synopses of the genre. For example, in one of István Gábor Benedek's stories, we read the following (the narrator here is an orthodox Jew and he is interrogated by an officer of the secret police, a Jew):

> Then he came out with it. The familiar story. The grandfather who was still an observant Jew. The son who already changed his name and pursued happiness in more worldly ways. Thus Deutsch became Derczei, the casino replaced the synagogue, Jewish fellowship gave way to hobnobbing with the gentry. But then came the war, the deportations, and sobering forced labor. And here stands a member of the third generation, a disgusting specimen, a smiling interviewer among the interrogators, whose questions are usually punctuated with slaps in the face.[14]

This brief outline of a Hungarian Jewish family's history in the twentieth century will be familiar to those who saw one of the most famous Hungarian films of recent years: István Szabó's *Sunshine,* an elaborate, representative cinematic version of a family novel. The film tells an important and thus far neglected story, which in many ways is unique in the annals of Jewish history. Though making some concessions to Hollywood-style film-making, *Sunshine* incorporates themes, characters, episodes from a number of Hungarian-Jewish sources. Szabó's film met with unexpected success in Hungary, and (there is much anecdotal evidence for this) it had a positively cathartic effect on many Hungarian Jews.

More recent films focusing specifically on the Holocaust in Hungary are worrisome because they are formulaic, inauthentic, sensationalist. I am thinking of films like *Gloomy Sunday* (Szomorú vasárnap), a German film actually, shot in Budapest, based on a Hungarian story and using a number of Hungarian actors, and Andor Szilágyi's *Rose's Songs* (A Rózsa énekei). The latter is a particularly glaring example of cinematic kitsch. It may work as wish fulfillment, but it strains credibility to the utmost. The film is derivative in many ways; let me cite just one

example. Supposedly based on a true story, *Rose's Songs* is about a group of Hungarian Jews taking refuge in a Buda villa in late 1944, their spirit being kept up by a famous Jewish opera singer whose house this is. A young boy, the son of the film's main character, does his turn as a Peeping Tom, climbing up a tree and catching glimpses of a pretty young girl taking a shower, and on one occasion of a wig-wearing orthodox Jewish lady, one of those hiding in the house; he happens to look when the lady's wig slips, exposing her bald head. The boy is so taken aback, he falls off the tree. The scene is highly reminiscent of a recurring memory in Imre Kertész's novel *Kaddish for a Child Not Born*, whose first-person narrator recalls that on a visit to observant relatives in the country, he once opened the bedroom door and saw not a sheitel-wearing aunt but "a bald woman in a red gown in front of a mirror".[15] He is dismayed, and the image stayed with him. But whereas in Kertész's novel the image becomes a potent symbol Jewish vulnerability and shame, in Andor Szilágyi's film it is simply a grotesque moment, one of many in the film, whose sole aim is to shock, without carrying any real meaning.

Imre Kertész, with or without the Nobel Prize, has achieved something very important in modern Hungarian literature, and specifically in the literature about the Holocaust, in that he has combined the reach for universality, the distilled, mythic truth of a parable, with the concreteness of realist fiction. György Köves, the hero of *Fateless*, is not simply a victim, one of the persecuted who gains insight into his own fatelessness, but a very real Jewish boy from Budapest, who tells his story. Kertész has always insisted that in *Sorstalanság* he did not intend to write a Holocaust novel, or indeed a novel in the conventional sense. "The greatest danger for me lay in the temptation of giving way to anecdotal digressions, intriguing, colorful but inessential details, singularly interesting little stories", he said in a 1999 interview. "The action had to follow a clearly devised structure, it had to be reduced to essentials. The story of Auschwitz has become part of the repository of European knowing and European memory. I had to fashion my story as a collective myth."[16] Indeed, each scene, each episode and character in the novel is at once concrete and emblematic; each detail used is crucial and representative.

Fateless is a universally valid meditation on evil in the twentieth century, an existentialist novel in which an absurd universe appears in the guise of a totalitarian system that strips one of his or her real self and imposes a role, a fate. Yet there is nothing abstract about the novel – for Kertész, lived reality is too important. He is a survivor who bears witness, but he is also a writer. Implicit in *Fateless* (as well as in Kertész's other works) is the belief that there is – there must be – art after Auschwitz. All of Kertész's literary works, not just *Fateless,* are the painful and risky undertakings of a writer who turns the material of his own life into serious fiction. The result is stirring and also disquieting, because for his characters transforming lived reality into words on paper is too often an obsessive rather than redemptive act.

All writers who deal with the Hungarian Jewish experience face such risks, even those whose works are not autobiographically inspired. But only the most courageous and gifted can, like, Kertész, shy away from easy answers, facile dénouements, and suggest that sudden insights and epiphanies may light the way but for an instant, after which one feels lost again.

Notes

1 Here is a representative sample of Hungarian Judaica published in recent years: Aladár Komlós, *Magyar-zsidó szellemtörténet a reformkortól a holocaustig* (Hungarian Jewish History of Ideas from the Age of Reforms to the Holocaust), 2 vols, Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 1997; Kinga Frojimovics et al., eds: *A zsidó Budapest – Emlékek, szertartások, történelem* (Jewish Budapest – Monuments, Rites, History), 2 vols. Budapest: MTA Judaisztikai Kutatócsoport, 1995; Petra Török, ed.: *A határ és a határolt – Töprengések a magyar-zsidó irodalom létformáiról* (Boundaries and Limits; Meditations on Hungarian Jewish Literature), Yahalom, 1997; Gábor Hamp, Özséb Horányi, and László Rábai, eds: *Magyar megfontolások a Soáról* (Hungarian Reflections on the Shoah), Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 1999; János Pelle: *Az utolsó vérvádak* (The Last Blood Libels), 1996; Viktor Karády: *Zsidóság, modernizáció, polgárosodás* (Jews, Modernity and the Rise to Middle Class), Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1997; Alan Unterman: *Zsidó hagyományok lexikona* (translation of *Dictionary of Jewish Lore and Legend*), Budapest: Helikon, 1999.

2 János Kőbányai, ed.: *Budapesti aggadák – A holocaust utáni irodalom* (Budapest Aggadot; Post-Holocaust Literature), Múlt és Jövő, 1999, 334.

3 *Ibid.*, 338.

4 See Susan R. Suleiman and Éva Forgács, eds: *Contemporary Jewish Writing in Hungary – An Anthology*. Lincoln–London: University of Nebraska Press, 2003.

5 Miklós Radnóti: *Napló* (Diary), Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó, 1989, 210.

6 *Ibid.*, 209.

7 See her essay, "Vád alá helyezett szerzők?" (Authors Under Indictment?) in *A határ és a határolt*, *op. cit.*, 230–245.

8 Ágnes Heller: "Zsidótlanítás a magyar zsidó irodalomban," in *Pikareszk Auschwitz árnyékában* (Picaresque in the Shadow of Auschwitz), Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 2003, 7–25.

9 See Ágnes Heller: "A zsidóság vonzásában" (Drawn to Judaism), in *Zsidó szellem ma* (The Jewish Spirit Today), Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 1999, 23–62.

10 Tamás Vekerdy: *Zsidó könyv* (Jewish Book), Budapest: Ursa Minor, 2002, 10, 11.

11 See Judit Elek, and Mihály Sükösd: *Tutajosok – A tiszaeszlári per dokumentumai* (The Rafters; Documents of the Tiszaeszlár Trial); Judit Elek, *Tutajosok – Filmforgatókönyv* (The Screenplay), in one volume, Budapest: Magvető, 1990.

12 See for example Gábor T. Szántó: *Mószer* (Snitch), Budapest: Magvető, 1997; *Keleti pályaudvar, végállomás* (Eastern Station: End of the Line), Magvető; István Gábor Benedek: *A komlósi tóra* (The Torah Scroll of Tótkomlós), Budapest: Dan Könyvkiadó, 1994; *Az elégett fénykép* (The Burnt Photograph), Magyar Könyvklub, 1997; György Dalos: *A körülmetélés* (The Circumcision), Budapest: Magvető, 1990; *Az istenkereső* [The God-Seeker], Magvető, 1999.

13 Rita Horváth: "A Changing Genre: Jewish Hungarian Family Novels After the Shoah" (Manuscript).

[14] István Gábor Benedek: *Az elégett fénykép*, *op. cit.*, 231–232.

[15] Imre Kertész: *Kaddish for a Child Not Born*, transl. by Christopher C. Wilson and Katharina M. Wilson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 19.

[16] "A vizsgálódó mondat" (The Inquiring Sentence), *Élet és Irodalom*, November 12, 1999, 3.

TRADITION AND SUBVERSION IN IMRE KERTÉSZ'S WORK

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This article offers a complement to previous readings of Kertész's Nobel-Prize winning novel *Fateless* and his other significant fiction *The Failure.* While previous critics of these key texts often read Kertész's representation of the Holocaust experience in the context of twentieth century European history or that of his personal biography, and *The Failure* in the context of the author's own experience of authorship in Hungary in the 1970s and 1980s, this essay argues for his indebtedness to the classic nineteenth century topos and genre of the *Bildungsroman* and to the genre of Künstlerroman. While in *Fateless,* the structural elements of the plot redeploy the elements of the *Bildungsroman,* its fundamental indebtedness to the modernist concept of the contingency of plot, action and character, and the essentially post-modernist contention about the futility of knowledge display a degree of tension in the text. *The Failure* also explores the well-known late-nineteenth century topos of the Künstlerroman and the representation of literary authorship. Studies about Kertész's work, the article suggests, could be further expanded by exploring the relationship between Kertész's work and different Hungarian literary traditions.

Keywords: *Fateless, The Failure,* Bildungsroman, Künstlerroman, subjectivity, contingency

When Imre Kertész was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 2002, it was not only European and American readers who received the news with tumultuous interest. Although twelve of his books had already been published, Kertész's name was unfamiliar to many Hungarian readers as well, and it was even rumoured that he lived in, or had moved to, Germany. Since then his work and his life have both received considerable attention. His personal experience paralleled his particular interest in the Holocaust as a historical and metaphysical fact, as well as a statement on history. This process of reading a life and its letters as mutually revelatory sets of information have often led readers to think that finding the man – the historically situated subject – behind the work is of paramount significance.

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Indeed, if one considers Kertész's three most important works, *Fateless* (1975), *Khaddish for a Child Not Born* (1990), and *The Failure* (1998), it is more than tempting to read them as autobiographical fiction, and the correspondence between well-known biographical details and the fiction of life is striking. The author was born into a secular Jewish family just as his main hero Köves; he was just as much the survivor of the Holocaust as Köves and similar protagonists; and Imre Kertész was just as much attempting to survive on the most meagre benefits of literary authorship as the Old Man, the hero of *The Failure.*[1] Yet, at the same time, it is worth considering the advice of Nancy K. Miller, who warns us of the dangers of the direct and uncomplicated identification between autobiographical hero and fictional character. "Despite the identity between the 'I' of the authorship and the 'I' of narrative, and the pacts of sincerity, reading these lives (of literary authors) is like shaking hands with gloves on."[2] If this warning is particularly appropriate for authors of autobiographies, then the same warning should be applied to reading fiction that draws upon autobiographical elements and models.

Fateless, Kertész's first work to attract serious critical attention, written in 1973, and not published for another two years, can be considered as a fictionalised autobiography. Yet, at the same time, it is also rooted in the *Bildungsroman* tradition since it very self-consciously deploys the narrative paradigm and plot devices invented in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, while simultaneously sharing the modern concepts of subjectivity and contingency, testing whether and how the *Bildungsroman* can be deployed to reflect the twentieth-century historical experience and modernist notions of causality and the self. *The failure,* a novel written in 1988 on the other hand provides another generic experiment, the deployment of the European tradition of the *Künstlerroman.* Both of these experiments allow Kertész to engage with Hungarian literary traditions, although neither of these genres have a long history in Hungarian prose. The novel of development is practically non-existent, while the *Künstlerroman* kind of narratives occur in twentieth-century literary autobiographies. But the very interest in those genres, and the experimentation of inventing them and testing their applicability, singles out Kertész as an innovator of Hungarian fiction.

Critical discussions of the long tradition of the *Bildungsroman* abound, yet most critics agree about the textbook characteristics of the genre. As Peterson summarises the features of the characteristically *male Bildungsroman* in the nineteenth-century realistic tradition, *Bildungsromane* commonly centre around a young hero's attempt at finding a place in the world, whether "that be through accommodation, rebellion, or withdrawal".[3] This "symbolic form of modernity", as Moretti points out, focuses upon the individual hero's social mobility (5); "apprenticeship". It is an "uncertain exploration of social space" (4) through travel, adventure, and labour, finally, and most commonly arriving at the motive of homecoming, thereby indicating the hero's reintegration into their larger or

smaller society.[4] Most often the hero's homecoming allows the refashioning of a social structure, which now accommodates the hero. This structure is different from the original one; nevertheless, its firmness is unquestioned.

Thematically and structurally Kertész's indebtedness to this tradition is obvious. The novel follows the life of a fourteen-year old hero, Köves for a year in a diachronic way. The protagonist faithfully follows the prescribed learning process of gradual socialisation and accommodation to external conditions, and the process is enabled by journey and labour. Köves' life follows the characteristic spatial trajectory of moving out of the family of origin and into the larger community. The boy, having grown up in a secular Jewish family in the early 1940s, is taken to forced labour in a factory, and then to a number of concentration camps, including Auschwitz, Buchenwald and Zeitz, where he subsequently experiences all the conditions and humiliations well-known from Holocaust narratives: inhuman and physically torturing labour, hunger, lack of sleep and lice. These physical circumstances provide both the impetus and the site for *Bildung.*

The trial and opportunity motives, normally taken to test the hero's development, become more pronounced in the second half of the narrative, when Köves's interaction with his environment becomes even more intensive. Already made aware of the existence of the gas chambers and the terrible purpose of the concentration camp, Köves becomes gradually drawn into the plot of the concentration camp. He no longer remains a distant observer of suffering, and his physical survival is increasingly threatened. He becomes the victim of atrocities: he is slapped on the face (165) for no apparent reason and subsequently becomes ill with a disease that could be considered as life-threatening under his circumstances.

Simultaneously with the increase of trial and opportunity, the process of acquiring knowledge also becomes more intensive, and he learns of survival skills. Indeed, as Köves declares, "I can state that certain things can be understood in a concentration camp only" (207). In this process his encounters with other "subjectivities" are crucial: learning is mainly enabled by his patron figure Bandi, Köves's companion in interpretation. Bandi teaches him a set of practical, physical and mental survival skills such as the rules of keeping clean, queuing up for food, as well as the mental and psychological habits of regularity (200). Nonetheless important, Köves considers his own position in relation to Hungarians as well as to Jews. Bandi Citrom thinks of the times spent in the Hungarian army with nostalgia, while his reservations are rooted primarily in his encounter with a Hungarian policeman (178), while Köves's reservations increase with time.

Not less significantly, he gains familiarity with his own Jewishness, a fact that is also facilitated by the help of other "subjectivities." Having been brought up in a secular Jewish family, he first learns about his own Jewishness through his father's deportation and from Uncle Lajos's monologues about the need for "sticking together." Nevertheless, his ambivalence concerning Jews is well-established.

In the camp the rabbi's monologues leave him with dissatisfaction because "he was unable to advise us on what to do" (85). This is also blatantly made clear in his encounter with the 'fins', or Orthodox Jews, in the camp (99), whom he regards not with personal affinity but with a sense of difference from himself. This is due not only to their loudly expressed communality and religious practices, which were alien to his secular upbringing, but also because of their different language. Indeed, once the beard of the rabbi is shaven off, he appears less "unusual" (124); and his second encounter with Orthodox Jews from Riga also suggests a distinct sense of difference from them (175). Nevertheless, he feels an increasing affinity with being a Jew, as he comes close to regretting his inability to say the Khaddish (204).

The return to Budapest, indeed, is not any different from the motives of return in traditional *Bildungsroman* narratives. "Rootless heroes" and "inhospitable environments" (231) are crucial sites of the later *Bildungsroman,* and the very motive of homecoming is commonly a point of disappointment for the *Bildungsroman* hero, and certainly a point of closure for the English one because it indicates the point of closure and the restructuring of social, or rather domestic relations, along with the assertion of the importance of structures. For Kertész's protagonist the homecoming equals disappointment: not only because of his own inability to communicate his experience, and therefore to tame it into ready-made narratives, but also because of the vast difference between his cognitive structure and that of his environment.

While the novel's emplotment recalls the nineteenth-century pattern of the *Bildungsroman,* Imre Kertész's novel is simultaneously strongly rooted in modernist or existentialist concepts of subjectivity, of isolation and contingency. The very difference of Kertész's narrative from the realistic literary tradition that created and accommodated the *Bildungsroman* was pointed out by contemporary critics, who although acknowledging the unique nature of Kertész's work, often objected to the non-mimetic representation of the Holocaust.[5] Köves personally does not experience the gas chambers and only knows about them. Due to his lack of personal familiarity with that most potent symbol of the concentration camps, he is left as a somewhat unreliable witness in the eyes of the survivors of the siege of Budapest. His exchange with a complete stranger underlines the dilemma.

"Nevertheless", he continued with an expression indicating a desire to set the world right and to clarify things, "you nevertheless, did not see any evidence of them." And I had to acknowledge that I had not. To which he remarked, " I see" (307).

One of the aspects of the modern self can be inferred from its difference from the traditional nineteenth-century concept of subjectivity. Moretti defines the subjectivity of the *Bildungsroman* hero as the pre-Freudian, unfragmented self, which is "the undisputable centre of its own structure" (11). The two driving forces be-

hind the self's development are the two equally important, yet conflicting cultural imperatives: the impetus of self-determination and the "equally imperious demands of socialisation" (15), implying that *Bildung* is not only a reactive process of accommodation, but it is an active negotiation between two, simultaneous and conflicting cultural imperatives, and this negotiation is performed by human agency. For a modernist subject, the very efficacy of human agency is more questionable. In Köves's position, the problem is not only the absence of what Radnoti terms as "quintessential European values", or rather liberal humanist values, in the concentration camp – to which it would be both futile and detrimental to acculturate himself – but the very fact that human agency in the inhuman world of the camp is minimal.[6] The nature and limits of his agency are indeed discussed at great length by young Köves on pages 196–205. Escape from the situation, as he suggests, can be threefold: a withdrawal into the world of imagination, which draws him into the realm of exotic trips and to domestic peace at home; an escape into hiding within the concentration camp by sleeping; and finally the most dangerous method of which he saw only one example: running away from the concentration camp. The only occurrence of which leads to the fugitive's execution, and so the concentration camp can be interpreted as the paradigmatic site of the modern condition.

Contingency of plot, action and character are also characteristics of modernism, and the contingency of Kertész's plot has been noted by critics who emphasised the essentially picaresque nature of action, where the temporal coincidence of characters being at the wrong place at the wrong time move the action forward.[7] This applies to Köves, who falls captive after leaving for work "as usual" (46) and to some of the supporting characters such as the "funny little man", who also experienced the same coincidence. In order to keep to the prescribed rules of staying in his own house the man gets on a bus, which eventually takes him to the toll office. This will become the starting point of his journey to Auschwitz; and the captives' release from imprisonment also seems unforeseen and unpredictable to the denizens of the camp. Not only events coincide but also, at least initially, Köves's Jewish identification appears to be more coincidence rather than fate. As it transpires from the conversation with the girl next door, who understands her Jewishness as given, Köves at length argues that his Jewishness is just a question of accident and uses the example of Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper* to prove the concept of uncertainty.

Concomitant with the above condition is an essentially isolated concept of the self, which is also rooted in modernist concerns. Unlike in traditional realistic narratives, where social relations appear as relations between individuals, "in the late *Bildungsroman* social institutions began to appear as the business bureaucracy of America, the Church of Portrait, and above the School of Mann and Musil".[8] In Kertész's world Köves appears significantly to spend his life in a way that lacks

essential relatedness. In all of his communities, whether family or camp, he remains an isolated subjectivity. Köves's starting point is that of the emotional outsider in his family of origin, whose sincere yet cold response to his father's deportation is something most resembling reassured satisfaction of having given him a nice time, and Uncle Vili's efforts to draw him into a community of Jewishness are also met with scepticism. During the second, the concentration camp based, period of his life, although appreciating individual kindness and sharing anecdotes about home and prisoners (186), Köves does not show any sense of any communality with others. The sense of dissociation is also made apparent by the fact that very few characters have proper names, and most of these proper names are misunderstood by him. Isolation rather increases than decreases, and his only mate Bandi's efforts at looking after him meet with disapproval. "I told him on a hundred occasions that his patronising is unacceptable to me; I want to be left alone" (218). And his only desire is to reject solidarity, only to maintain his isolation, leading to an escape into illness.

From the perspective of isolation, it is particularly useful to consider two further factors. One is his very concept of his own Jewishness. Initially, he appears to regard this aspect of identity as essentially external. This sense of difference is further reinforced by his own sporadic comments on Orthodox Jews he encounters in the camps. Initially, he finds them "unusual", and the very difference between secular Jews such as himself and Yiddish-speaking Orthodox Jewry is keenly felt by both him and the Yiddish speakers. Although there is a slight identification of himself and Jewish identity towards the end of the novel, when he regrets not being able to say the Khaddish for the captured and hanged fugitives, this self-identification remains problematic. His Jewish credentials become questioned by people at home, who, on hearing that he did not actually see the gas chambers, respond to his experiences with doubts.

For Kertész, therefore, the question of writing a *Bildungsroman* is fraught with difficulty. The traditional *Bildungsroman* plot is driven by assumptions about the linearity of "historical", "out there" history, as well as about the linear progression of individual development which is served by work. This linear plot also generates meanings about the value of *Bildung*. In Kertész's work the progressivity of individual development is questioned, and this is not only because of the lack of inherent values in the "school of life" (the concentration camp) but also by the essential lack of belief in the coherence of the character. Contingency and alienation are the fundamental characteristics of character and human condition, and the index of the failure of the process of *Bildung* is all the more obvious in the closure of the novel. Not only adjustment is impossible, but the question is whether and how Köves, returning home, can apply the skills and identities acquired in the camp, or how indeed, pscychological survival is possible for him? For Köves, the problem

is not so much a postmodern contention about the impossibility of knowledge, but the very futility of knowledge – knowledge of skills and knowledge of self.

While the genre and the narratives of the *Bildungsroman* undoubtedly influence the narrative models of Kertész's work, another, arguably similarly autobiographical novel, *The Failure* provides a tentative analysis of literary authorship. Indeed, just about all of Kertész's male heroes are men of letters. The hero of *Fateless,* although not a professional writer, does in effect provide a detailed, though undated, diary of his experience. The hero of *The Khaddish* is a lecturer and writer, who also discusses the genesis of his authorship. Most characters of *The Failure* (1988) are also situated at the different segments of the literary profession. It is a twin-novel in the modernist tradition. Its first section describes and ageing writer and translator, struggling with the very labour of writing as well as with the limited material circumstances forced upon literary workers by the late Kádár-regime, while he is rereading his own texts and critical reflections about his literary submissions of some twenty years before. The second half of the novel concerns the return of a literary author into "normal" and "literary" life after what might be presumed as internal deportation within Hungary in the 1950s. Indeed, if one reads Kertész's work through in its entirety, one discovers that just about all the periods of post-1940 Hungarian history are represented, often anecdotically, in his work.

While the concern with authorship is a relatively underrepresented theme in Hungarian writing, its development in other nineteenth-century literatures is well known. As Mary Poovey points out, the standard romantic image of literary authorship derives from the eighteenth-century representations of the gentleman scholar, and its apotheosis is Carlyle's discussion of "The Hero as Poet" (1840).[9] By the end of the nineteenth century the whole range of the economies of literary authorship and its generic and social implications gained further exposure. This was best exemplified by Gissing's sustained analysis of the world of letters in *New Grub Street;* and in Gissing's world the *par excellence* artist is an autonomous creator. Here we find Reardon, a novelist who is physically and economically defeated by an increasingly commercialised literary marketplace. This character is sharply contrasted with Milvain, the materialistic tradesman of letters and striver, who self-consciously chooses the vulgar market for his literary commodity and who ends up victorious both in personal terms and in terms of finance.

Kertész's *Failure* is blatantly indebted to an essentially post-romantic tradition of representing the artist and also questions the potential of professionalizing authorship, which looms large in the work. The hero of its first, "metafictional", part is a translator, unofficial literary critic, and novelist, attempting to write a novel, while the second part of the novel also concerns the career of another literary author, Köves, who is not only a novelist and author of comedies but also a paid scribe for a senior civil servant as well as the author of political communications.

The head of personnel at Köves's ministry is a secret poet (306). Although it is difficult to decide how many novels *The Failure* contains (it is the title of the old man's story in the first novel, and it is also the title of the novel written by the main character of the second novel), these narratives share the same concern with the nature of authorship. Indeed, they analyse the nature of authorship from precisely the same ground.

Many of the characteristics of authorship in the novel share the well-known late nineteenth-century formulations on its nature. This is true in terms of the social and sociological prerequisites of writing novels, as well as the meaning of the act of publication. At the same time, it also shares modernist assumptions about the complicated relationship between the subject of the writing and the act of writing. The romantic image of literary authorship remained resilient. It defined authorship as an essentially individualistic act, whose product emanates from the author's genius, and whose primary condition is isolation. It also provided a very set hierarchy of literary genres, privileging the novel and poetry and appreciating popular genres to a lesser degree.

This vision is particularly effectively portrayed, carried on, and tested by Kertész's work. The old man and the hero of the second narrative share a consensus about the inherent, essentially modernist, hierarchy of literary genres. Journalism "is a lie, or at least silly irresponsibility" (180), and the moral meaning of journalism is made explicit by the fact that Köves embarks upon this trade after his release from internal deportation. Translation is despised and only seen as a commercial activity, and writing comedies is similarly a question of earning a livelihood. The old man could have written "more useful things, for instance, comedies" (86), and comedies are also targeted as the chief literary means for monetary gain by Sziklai and Köves, two characters in the second part. Most obviously the literary genre privileged by all of them is poetry(306) and even more importantly fiction.

The practice of writing the novel appears an essentially isolated and highly individualistic and expressive act. This process requires solitude, "the old man stood in front of the filing cabinet and stood there thinking" (14), while for Köves the sociability of the café provides the right venue for light comedies (366). The very process of writing is slow and painful. As the old man recollects, "I started to write a novel. I wrote and then I tore it up, I rewrote it and then I tore it up again" (30) and subsequently, "authorship becomes 'slavery' and 'captivity'" (62). The nature of this slow, painful and halting process, is summarised in the following quotation:

> He has already written many books; first and foremost, his first book he worked on that book for a good decade (then, writing books was not his profession, therefore he wrote that book out of caprice). The book was then published under rather adverse circumstances, after

> two years, for his second book, four years were already sufficient, and subsequently, he spent writing his books the time that was absolutely necessary (18).

Not only is the process of writing painful and halting but it is also an essentially self-oriented act. Its origins are located in nature rather than in culture, "I could possibly not have imagined any activity for myself" (78). It does draw upon personal experience, as is demonstrated by the correlation between the old man's experience of writing and rejection and the subject matter of the second novel as well as the "poem in prose" written by the chief of staff at the ministry, which narrates a real event in the history of the ministry.

The ultimate purpose of the writing of the novel is also defined in the spirit of high modernism. Although its original purpose is publication – "I would have written my novels in order to get them into editorial offices" (65) –, this purpose of publication gradually erodes in the novel. At some places, the idea of writing a novel "the original purpose of my enterprise (...) has been lost"; and Köves elsewhere suggests that "he wrote his novel the same way as he would have cast himself out of an aeroplane as though it had been the only way to survive" (141), indicating that the objective of writing is essentially an act of understanding and interpretation of the self.

Literary genius, as it appears, therefore, is a condition rather than the question of training and effect or action. Training, in fact, is openly rejected by the author. Oddly, although self-reflexivity and self-analysis are central issues, the text contains no information about the intellectual or literary formation of the author. While his career as a translator of fiction explicitly forces him to examine the nature of the trade by other authors, he flatly refuses to appreciate the piece of work that was written driven by the self-conscious mastery of prose. He also regards the professionalization with a high degree of ambivalence. Indeed, in order to consider professionalization in literature, it is necessary to consider Harold Perkin's definition of professionalism in *The Rise of Professional Society*. As he argues, a professional society is "one structured around career hierarchies rather than classes, one in which people find their place according to trained expertise and the service they provide rather than possession or lack of inherited wealth or acquired capital".[10] The definition of professionalism in contrast with "inherited wealth" for authors in the Kádár regime is obviously problematic. Yet the very notion of professionalism as training and effect – the professional's work is to a social end – is eminently applicable. Nevertheless, Kertész's hero blatantly refuses any self-conscious identification with professionalism, "After all, I have written a novel. Although I could possibly not have imagined any other activity for myself, I never considered it to be my profession" (78).

Kertész's definition of writing locates the process in the self, originating from the self, and targeting the self. After gradually diminishing the process of publica-

tion, along with this process, there is one particularly important perspective that allows for the application of the notion of romantic genius. Partly, this difference consists in an essential redefinition of art. For most nineteenth-century narratives the notions of modernist theories of writing – the very concept of a writing that complicates the uncomplicated relationship between the author as the origin of meaning and that emphasises the autonomous nature of literary creation, "My labour, of writing novels, in reality consists of nothing else than the consistent deliberate shrinking of my own experience" (84) – only hindered the process of work

> I wanted to transmit experience – otherwise, I would not have written a novel. To transmit, in my own way, according to my own ideas, to transmit the material possible for myself, my material, myself, ... But I did not think of one thing: that we cannot mediate ourselves to ourselves (85).

Yet this exploration – the ability of language to represent reality – is not systematically explored by any of his characters.

The novel *The Failure*, indeed, can be considered as one example of a specular autobiography, to adapt Janice Carlisle's phrase, which creates an autobiographical self by mirroring the life of another. Kertész, indeed, has never written his own autobiography. One might argue that this would be entirely unnecessary, given the deeply autobiographical nature of his fiction, and in any event the succession of novels reveals everything that there is to know about Kertész, his life, and his ideas on writing. Yet, this interest in life and in ideas on writing also raises pertinent questions about Kertész and literary traditions. While now at least two generations of critics have been interested in establishing Kertész's position on the holocaust and the nature of language and representation, oddly limited attention has been paid to Kertész the artist rather than Kertész the thinker, and even less attention has been paid to him as the reader and explorer of current and past Hungarian literary tradition – a task unlikely to be resolved by critics unfamiliar with this literature. The Kertész studies, indeed, have yielded at least three recent volumes – one a monograph and two volumes of studies – yet a literary historical reading, critical narratives that focus upon Kertész's engagement with Hungarian and European literary traditions, as well as the influence of his work in the translation industry still remain tasks for the future.

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Notes

1 Kertész, Imre. *Sorstalanság.* Budapest: Magvető, n.d. 17th edition; Kertész, Imre: *A kudarc.* Budapest: Magvető, n.d. 8th edition. The translations are mine.

2 Cited by Joanne Shattock, in Vincent Newey and Philip Shaw (eds), *Mortal Pages, Literary Lives: Studies in Nineteenth-Century Autobiography.* Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996, 141.

3 Linda Peterson. "The Female Bildungsroman: Tradition and Subversion in Oliphant's fiction", in D. J. Trela, *Margaret Oliphant: The Gentle Subversive.* Cranbury–London: Associated University Press, 1995, 66.

4 Franco Moretti. *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture.* London: Verso, 1987.

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6 Szirák, *op. cit.* 25.

7 Szirák, *op. cit.* 20.

8 Moretti, *op. cit.* 230.

9 Mary Poovey. *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender.* London: Virago Press, 1989, 102–103.

10 Harold Perkin. *The Rise of Professional Society.* New York: Routledge, 1990, 35.

KERTÉSZ AMONG THE GERMANS

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Imre Kertész's current role in the German debate about the Holocaust is contrasted to the reception of Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, the influence of György Lukács, and the prominence of Martin Walser. Kertész's popularity in Germany dovetailed with that of Goldhagen, but whereas the latter's impact was fleeting, Kertész has become a guardian of Holocaust memory in Germany. While Goldhagen repudiated past German culture, Kertész is both a survivor of the Holocaust and champion of a lost Central European Jewish-German culture, in the tradition of Wagner, Nietzsche, and Thomas Mann. In this capacity he serves as an anti-Lukács, reviving or rather honoring a lost cosmopolitan tradition. Both Kertész and Walser capture the adolescent confusion, but the message and cosequences of Kertész's camp experiences of 1944 and 1945 and Martin Walser's autobiographical account of the same years in the Hitler Jugend are starkly different. In the present German dialogue on the Holocaust, Kertész's language of homelessness acts as an antedote to Walser's cult of the Heimat.

Keywords: Bubis, Ignatz; destructive and evasive thesis; Goldhagen, Daniel Jonah; Grass, Günter; Lukács, György; Mann, Thomas; Nietzsche, Friedrich; Peace Prize of the Frankfurt Book Fair; Reich-Ranicki, Marcel; Schröder, Gerhard; Step by Step; Spielberg, Stephen Schindler's List; Wagner, Richard; Walser, Martin; Wehrmacht exhibition

In the fall of 2002, Americans asked who is Imre Kertész? An undercurrent of irritation accompanied the question: Nobel Prize Winners in Literature are expected to be celebrities. They win because their books, their scripts, their movie adaptations are successful. Americans were shocked to discover that Kertész was not that well known in his own country. In Hungary the question was why is the prizewinner Imre Kertész? Hungarian literary nationalists reacted to the choice as if it had been a studied affront. After a century's neglect of Hungarian literature, the Nobel committee chose a writer whose work flaunted the central taboo of post-1945 Hungarian cultural politics – Hungarian complicity in the Holocaust. *Fateless* had been Kertész's ticket of admission to what Germans call *Weltliteratur*. The Nobel committee seemed to be responding to Kertész's enthusiastic

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readership in Germany that had grown dramatically since 1995. In Germany, at least at the Frankfurt book fair October, 2002, there was the satisfaction of having bet on the right horse.

A grateful Kertész acknowledged that his work has been spread in the German language. The German President, in turn, expressed his admiration that an author who had suffered through the German concentration camps would nevertheless become a translator and conduit of German culture into Hungary. Kertész would spend much of his year as Nobel Prize Winner as the honored guest at various German state functions. On January 27, 2003, the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, now the day Germany commemorates the victims of Nazism, he returned to Buchenwald in the company of the Minister President of Thuringia. On October 3, "the Day of German Unity", the Hungarian Nobel Prize Winner stood on the same podium with the German Chancellor in Magdeburg. He heard Gerhard Schröder praise him, and then proceeded to chastise Schröder's foreign policy as anti-American. Such chutzpah seemed to endear him all the more to his German public. Kertész's willingness to express disconcerting opinions at public events was expected, perhaps even required. In January, 2004, he spoke at the formal closing of the traveling exhibition, "War of Annihilation – Crimes of the Wehrmacht, 1941–44". It is difficult to think of any major event in Germany that involves the Holocaust in the immediate future that will not seek to include Imre Kertész on the rostrum.

How are we to understand this surprising success in Germany? Certainly, Kertész's hitherto obscurity helps – he has not yet overstayed his welcome. He remains a novelty, a belated find. Unlike Günter Grass, the most recent German-language Nobel Prize Winner of 1999, Kertész has not tired the German public with untoward political opinions. Instead, Kertész's infectious delight in his newly won celebrity status is reciprocated in the self-congratulatory tone of the German public toward their Hungarian protégé.

On a more serious level, German-speaking audiences have been intrigued by the tension in Kertész as an unrelenting witness of the Holocaust but also as a grieving devotee of German Kultur. In *Fateless,* the knowing reader recoils when the naïve adolescent protagonist admires the clean, efficient death machine. In his prose and public speeches, Kertész presents himself as the Last of the Mohicans, the last of the great and now lost tradition of Central European Jewish writers for whom the German language and its culture was a second home. He is at once the merciless scribe of the horrors of Buchenwald, and the pilgrim entering the Goethe House in adjoining Weimar as if it were a shrine. It is this combination that gives him an appeal that transcends the divisions of the German-speaking world. He can flatter West Germans by praising their democratic society, their *Bildung,* and their efforts to confront their past, but he also can claim that he is able to understand the problems in sudden freedom and the torpor and ideological dead hand

of East German life better than the West Germans. It was an East German publisher that first published *Fateless* in 1990, and Kertész's first literary award in Germany was the Brandenburg Prize of 1995. One of the jurors, an East German, has said that it was Kertész's uncanny ability to approach Auschwitz through the experience of the soft totalitarianism of post-Stalinism that tipped the scales in his favor.[1] Kertész can also commiserate with Austrians over the lost glories of an imperial multiculturalism. Like so many Budapesters in 1989, Kertész hurried to Vienna, the sibling city of Hungarian dreams. Vienna chose Kertész for their "One City, One Book", program, distributing 100,000 copies among the Viennese of *Step by Step,* the screenplay of *Fateless. Step by Step* will not have an American happy ending. Kertész has objected strongly to Spielberg's shift from black and white to color and light in the last scenes of the survivors in *Schindler's List.* However, Kertész has apparently agreed to give *Step by Step* a German rather than a Hungarian ending. The last scene will not be the disturbing return to Budapest, but will depict, instead, the liberated protagonist still on German soil, awaiting departure in bombed-out Dresden.

This paper will explore Kertész's German connection by considering his relation to three antipodes: György Lukács, Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, and Martin Walser. 1. I will argue that Kertész functioned within the world of Budapest Jewry as an anti-Lukács, redeeming German culture from the aspersions cast upon it by Marxist Mandarins. 2. In Germany Kertész has reinforced the Goldhagen phenomenon, as an outsider who serves as a catalyst in the ongoing German debate on the Holocaust and its legacy in Germany. While the Goldhagen furor of 1996 highlighted the crisis of Holocaust historiography, the Kertész reception shifted the focus to the crisis of the literary representation of the Holocaust. 3. This has resulted in a confrontation that has yet to take place, may never take place, but one which has nevertheless hung over the Kertész reception like a storm cloud: the counter-point of Imre Kertész and Martin Walser, which once again pits the cult of the Heimat against the prison of homelessness.

I

Americans after 1945 tried the guilty and fostered a culture of regret, but East European Communists were less convinced that the population could be cleansed and focused instead on distancing society from its past. To do so the intelligentsia was expected to adhere to an explanatory historiography. Lukács staged his own cultural show trial aimed at purging many of the very German thinkers who had absorbed his attention in Budapest at the turn of the century. The indictment had been worked out in Soviet exile when his own existence was on the line. Lukács presented his fellow Budapest Jewish intellectuals with a strict intellectual regi-

men by which they might undo the Nietzscheanism in themselves as the first step in becoming the new Soviet man.[2] Kertész's trajectory moved in the opposite direction from socialist realism to existentialism and back to German romanticism. Already in the early 1950s Kertész rebelled against the denigration of the Hungarian Jewish-German bourgeois culture. He was intoxicated by Wagner's operas, which he found so exuberant and so unlike the Puritanism around him. He took the posthumous Thomas Mann as his mentor, whom he resembled in avoiding the university while adopting the mannerisms of the *Gebildeten*. In time Kertész would labor to de-Nazify those German thinkers – notably Nietzsche – whom Lukács had so brilliantly Nazified in *The Destruction of Reason*. With the exception of a few weeks in East Germany in 1962 and another few weeks in West Germany in 1983, Kertész approached the German world through the *Innerlichkeit* of his wartime memories and his translations. Since 1989 Kertész's growing influence has improved the link between German and Hungarian culture in Germany and legitimated the renewed embrace of German bourgeois culture in Hungary. But the connection has a twist with Hungary falling short of the West German example. Hungarians, Kertész argues, have missed the boat. They had failed to confront Auschwitz, and now it is too late. "Germany became richer in that it dealt with the past. This didn't happen in Hungary." Kertész writes. "The cartel of silence still rules."[3]

II

Since 1945 West German historiography has confronted its past by fluctuating between destructive and evasive theses – the destructive viewing the Holocaust as the logical outcome of German history and the evasive viewing the genocide as an accidental intrusion into German history.[4] The destructive thesis sought to master the German past by devaluing the German past. It is generally seen as coming from non-Germans, from outside initiative: the Nuremberg trials, the Israeli capture of Adolf Eichmann, the American TV mini-series Holocaust, and the Goldhagen book tour. The evasive thesis is seen as the defensive, apologetic German response from inside: Adenauer's policy of financial restitution and benign neglect of the Nazi past, the normalization initiatives of the 1970s, and the relativization of the Holocaust in the 1980s. Yet there was always a German constituency for the destructive thesis, just as there was a non-German constituency for the evasive thesis. The destructive thesis searched for a new basis of recovery. The evasive thesis responded by insisting Germans were normal. The destructive thesis operated with overstatement and eloquence, but could soon exhaust its possibilities and staying power. The evasive thesis did not defend the crimes: the most extreme form of evasion, Holocaust denial, simply denies the crimes took place.

The evasive method countered condemnation of the German past with a web of complicating and extenuating factors, but once in place, the evasive thesis sought to make of itself a new orthodoxy. It inclined to moral indifference and finally was blind-sided by the sudden revival of the destructive thesis. The evasive thesis may have begun as concealment, as a conspiracy of silence, but once raised to an orthodoxy it bequeathed a form of autism. This inability to express oneself, masquerading under the injunction of silence, condemned the following generations to the role of dupes and cowards. No wonder the younger generations of the 1960s and the 1990s resented inheriting the evasions of their elders.

In comparing the destructive and the evasive theses, one can say that the destructive thesis has the merit of logic: it deduces history from its conclusion. Goldhagen's formula, "No Germans, no Holocaust," puts it succinctly. Yet it raises a moral problem, as it aims at judging a whole nation and people. To condemn whole societies can lead to an inverted racism, to anti-Germanism. In a different way the evasive thesis avoids the issue; it destroys the continuity of German history by treating Nazism as a fluke. Goldhagen resolved this problem by asserting on the one hand that the Holocaust was a German project, not a modern, fascist, totalitarian, or Asiatic project. But in the same breath, or rather in the conclusion, Goldhagen offered absolution to the Germans. Destroy your past, reject the political culture of the nineteenth and first-half-of-the-twentieth century, and you shall be free.

The Goldhagen furor echoed the controversy of 1986 when the argument was floated that the destruction of European Jewry could be equated with the suffering in the Gulag or the death of Wehrmacht soldiers as they retreated in 1944/45. In the *Historikerstreit* Holocaust historians denied this relativization. One of the striking features of the whirlwind Goldhagen book tour of 1996 was that left-liberal-leaning audiences favored Goldhagen over the prominent left-liberal historians they had championed a decade before. This time around the public resented the historians' flaunting of Holocaust expertise as the final arbiter. Goldhagen was seen as besieged by a clique of historians, who expected that he meet their criteria. The crudities of Goldhagen, his penchant for the pornography of violence, had more appeal than the refined esoterica of the functionalist/intentionalist debate. By turning the discussion of Auschwitz into an argument over the timing of Nazi decision-making, German historians, with their insider knowledge of how the Third Reich operated, could assert a kind of intellectual monopoly over the discussion of the Holocaust. Also their much heralded structuralist approach turned out to have troublesome ties to Nazi *Volksgeschichte*. There was outrage that German historians, so diligent in uncovering the past of other professions, had blurred their own history. Goldhagen's spotlight on the "willing executioners" had inadvertently shed unwelcome light on Hitler's "willing historians."

Goldhagen embodies the Americanization of the Holocaust as exemplified in the creation of the Holocaust museum on the Washington Mall and the penchant of identifying German *Kultur* with the Holocaust, that is, making its starting point Kafka and Celan rather than Goethe and Schiller. Kertész represents an East-Europeanization of the Holocaust. The Goldhagen controversy was almost exclusively a West German affair. East German voices were hardly heard. Just as the focus of Holocaust scholarship is moving eastward, so Kertész's concern with the destruction of Jewish and German culture in Eastern Europe reflects the crisis of the literary representation of the Holocaust.

III

Two years after the Goldhagen book tour, Martin Walser's speech on receiving the Peace Prize of the Frankfurt Book Fair, ignited a scandal when he complained that although Germans had become a "normal people" Auschwitz continued to be used as a "moral club" against the German nation and its culture. In a 1965 essay, "Our Auschwitz," Walser had rallied his age group, the Hitler Jugend generation, to assume responsibility by facing the German past. Imre Kertész and Martin Walser are the same age. Walser was born in 1927, Kertész in 1929, but survived Auschwitz by claiming to be born two years earlier. Kertész has been integrated as the missing voice into the literary exchange of those born in the 1920s – this so-called Hitler Jugend generation and the youngest age-group to survive the camps.

Walser has been called a German John Updike, a prolific and prominent delineator of the provincial German middle class since the 1950s. Unlike Updike, Walser was a frequent commentator on German politics. In the late 1980s Walser grumbled that belated remorse for Auschwitz was being used to justify German disunity. His call in 1998 that enough is enough received a standing ovation. Only Ignatz Bubis, the German Jewish leader, and his wife, remained sitting. Outside on the steps of the Paul's Church, the site of the 1848 German Parliament, Bubis accused Walser of "spiritual arson".

In the months preceding Kertész's Nobel Prize, Walser was again in the news. His latest novel had its protagonist, a novelist, murder an obnoxious Jewish critic. The thinly disguised caricature of Marcel Reich-Ranicki was deemed by many as anti-Semitic, and Chancellor Schröder was criticized for entering into a radio discussion with Walser. In October 2002 Kertész's publisher denied press reports that Kertész had said that he had been personally offended by Walser's anti-Semitism. Kertész claimed his remarks had been misunderstood. Kertész subsequently said he did not find any anti-Semitism in Walser, only bitterness and wounded pride.[5] In February, 2004 Kertész and Walser switched publishers; when Kertész

moved from Rowohlt to Suhrkamp, Walser complained of lack of loyalty on the part of Suhrkamp and moved to Rowohlt.

Recently Walser has also released an autobiographical novel celebrating the intrinsic goodness of popular village culture in the German Catholic Southwest as he experienced it during World War II. Although he volunteered for military service at age sixteen, his adolescent character did so without knowledge of Nazi crimes, and, in any case, was fully immunized by his village culture against its brutal temptations. His act was ideological only in the sense that a mixture of Nietzsche and Karl May together with a dash of patriotism made the war seem alluring. Rather than berate the sentimental blinders of provincial Germany, Walser offers a paean of praise for hearth and home. "Without a home man is a miserable being, a leaf in the wind. He cannot protect himself. Anything can happen to him. He is a wild beast."[6] In Walser's world homelessness becomes the ultimate pathology. He laments the decline in the sense of home, for one cannot have too much nurture.

When asked about Walser's protagonist, lost in an innocent subjectivity, Kertész termed it an "historical lie", declaring he did not believe it was possible for a sixteen-year-old to be unaware of what was happening in Germany in 1944.[7]Kertész's language of homelessness is the antidote to Walser's cult of the Heimat. Kertész finds Walser's expression – *wegschauen* – looking away – as fundamentally harmless and ultimately pointless since Auschwitz happened and cannot be wished away.[8] Auschwitz is not a Jewish event but a traumatic rupture in the fabric of western civilization. For Kertész all roads lead to and from Auschwitz. "Whatever I think about, I always think about Auschwitz. Even if I am seemingly speaking about something completely different, I am speaking about Auschwitz. I am a medium for the spirit of Auschwitz. Auschwitz speaks through me." Kertész presents himself not as an historian but as the exemplar of the last age-group to directly experience the Holocaust. "We are the last. Question us. We are the ones that know", Kertész told the audience upon receiving a German literary prize a day before he heard that he had won the Nobel Prize.[9] At the closing of the Wehrmacht exhibition, Kertész warned of the "dark energy of hatred."[10] Germans had once taken the road to total hatred, but had learned to honor truth by confronting themselves, thereby becoming one of the most stable democracies in Europe. While one can talk of similar Walser–Kertész exchanges in Hungary, these take place without the backdrop of forty years of assuming responsibility. Hungarians were, instead, locked into a catechism of disingenuous Communist pseudo-explanations, and the false antidote has been a martyrdom in which blame has rested elsewhere and amnesia has locked out the freedom of introspection.

Notes

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THE TREMOR OF CAIN: RETURN OF THE DEPORTED TO HUNGARY

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Imre Kertész was among the 82,000 Hungarian Jews who returned in 1945. The transition from camp to home, the adjustment fom adolescent trauma to adult life is only hinted at in his works. This paper situates Kertész in the identity crisis of the immediate postwar period. The confusion of displaced identities in the aftermath of WWII, prompted psychologist Erik Erikson to universalize the adolescent identity crisis as a central contemporary problem. In Hungary not only Jews but the entire society was reforging identities. Borders were porous, so were political and religious affiliations. Kertész's identity was defined, at least in a negative way, by the Holocaust: as a Jew without being a Jew, as a survivor when it was best to keep quiet. He lived in the constant of the world of Buchenwald and of Stalinist Hungary, with their constricted options and ideological imperatives fashioned upon twisted idealisms. His recreation of the Holocaust in *Fateless* and of the existentialist experience of living with memory in *Kaddish*, has made for disquieting reading abroad, as well. In ignoring heroic clichés he has transgressed the identity of victim and victimizer.

Keywords: Bibó, István; displaced persons; Erikson, Erik; Hevesi, Dr. Ferenc; Holocaust survivors; identity crisis, Jewish identity; post-Fascist identity; post-Holocaust identities; Illyés, Gyula; Kádár, János; Karády, Viktor; Köves; Márai, Sándor; Parragi, György; reconstruction, post-war

In Kertész's retelling of the Cain and Abel story, Cain, a peasant farmer, was jealous of his brother Abel, the shepherd. Cain loved Abel, and if Abel had been his sister, he would have raped her. Since he was his brother, he killed him. Denied the fruit of the land, and superstitious, he layed low at first. Cain recouped, built a life in the city with a family. When he happened to think about his brother, his hand trembled in memory of the good times past. When he thought of the Lord, he covered his mouth and snickered – he had one-upped God.[1] Cain suffered the spasmodic, troubling remembrance, but he also had the satisfaction of having gotten away with the crime. Elsewhere Kertész indicts God, or we might say Western Civilization, for inciting Cain's murderous jealousy by preferring Abel's offering

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and then ignoring the murder and protecting the murderer – "just like a dictator," Kertész declares.[2]

Americans find reading Kertész disquieting. Students anticipate another didactic unit on the Holocaust and expect nothing new. Florida students read Elie Wiesel's *Night* in the ninth grade, and there are summer workshops for teachers, elementary through high school, on teaching the Holocaust. The University of Central Florida will soon be hosting similar workshops for Hungarian high school teachers.

My students were initially repelled by the lack of emotional attachment, insight, or engagement on the part of Köves, the protagonist in *Fateless*. Kertész transgresses the identity of victim and victimizer even to the point of having his character identify with Mengele. Through Kertész students contemplate the Holocaust as an existential experience, usually for the first time. Stripped of the moral pedagogy, the Holocaust moves from the incomprehensible evil to the tactile and real. Reading *Fateless* has had a collateral effect of enhancing students' sophistication toward the historian's craft. They come to understand that history is experienced without hindsight. But recently a student from last year stopped me to ask if I had met Kertész, because she wanted to know if his concentration campmate, Bandi Citrom, had survived. American students grasp for that happy ending – a happy ending that Köves's return to a distant mother, a remarried stepmother, or an indifferent city did not provide.

It is with some relief that students read of Kertész's insistence on retaining the Holocaust as his memory, his youth, and his experience. In rejecting the advice of the elderly neighbors, Köves has grown up, become wiser at the end. At last he stands up to shortsighted adults and stands as a person able to think on his own for himself, perceiving the world in terms of his own experience. The dominant narrative of the Holocaust concludes with the departure of the Jewish remnant from Central Europe. Leaving Europe, leaving the Holocaust, and the politics that bred it behind them. Kertész at fifteen was too young to leave. This was a period of flux, but the array of options for a fifteen-year-old returnee perhaps existed more in theory than in practice.

Kertész lived in the constant of the worlds of Buchenwald and Stalinist Hungary with their strictly constricted options and ideological imperatives fashioned upon twisted idealisms. Recreating the Holocaust during the Kádár period, was not a simple act of remembering. The writing required reconstruction; revisiting the sites; testing and restoring memory. Kertész's identity had already been formed by then, at least in a negative way: he was a Jew without being a Jew; a survivor where the meaning of Auschwitz had been stripped of its political import; a Hungarian novelist who translated German philosophy. Kertész confronted and held onto the past, but it was not a particularly usable past in that atmosphere of preferred silence or private whispers. Kertész's novels are autobiographical; they

chronicle his own perceptions and transformations, yet "I as a fiction." The division between public and private identity was particularly acute for Hungarian Jews, who collectively redefined and constructed new identities between 1945 and 1956. About 100,000 Hungarian Jewish survivors left Europe and in the process embraced different identities as Israelis or Jewish Americans. But for the approximately 80,000 Hungarian Jews who remained in Hungary, the transition years were critical but have remained largely unexplored.

After the Holocaust the former expectations of Hungarian Jews were dashed, self-understandings were damaged. Hungarian Jews had been stripped of their Hungarian identity and then were obliged to reclaim or repudiate it. Kertész locates his identity not in being a Jew, but in being tortured as a Jew. In *Kaddish for a Child Not Born,* an identity book, Kertész subsumes and intertwines his identity as a writer, as a Hungarian writer, the marginality of the Holocaust writer, with the burden of Jewishness, and the love of a Jewess. The image of the bald Jewish aunt is a traumatic negative identification. The alluring attractive woman coming across the green carpet is also just as immediately identifiable as a Jewess.

The transition from camp to home, the adjustment from adolescent trauma to adult life has not been a subject of either Imre Kertész's fiction or prose works. Yet, the identity crisis of that moment – his consignment to a Jewish fate, his identity as a Magyar writer, and his embrace of existentialist theory and German literary culture speak to an adolescent training and scars. Hungarian Jewry was the largest surviving and remaining Jewish Community in Central Europe after World War II. Unlike Poland, Hungary never became *Judenfrei,* or nearly so. Anti-Semitism and Jewish reintegration faced their contenders rather than their ghosts. "I am a ghost", Kertész once declared.[3]

In 1945 Budapest was a city of rubble. The walls of the ghettoes fell with the bitter battle of Budapest in January and February 1945, and publicity about the concentration camps in March and April 1945 marked a second beginning to the liberation story in Hungary. The timing for the Germans as for the Hungarians could not have been worse. At the very moment when dependence on foreign succor was greatest, the full extent of the crimes became evident. Individually and collectively the Hungarian Christian majority felt like martyrs of defeat, rape, and pillage; yet as defeated German allies, they stood accused and felt threatened by the claims of the victims.

The Hungarian camp survivors began arriving back in Hungary in the fall of 1945. The deportees and the Budapesters, including Jews, had experienced two very different traumas. Citizens of Budapest look

> ... shudderingly at the bald, dirty, unkempt returnees. Returnees don't speak much. They lie on the straw bedding of transient homes and in ... emergency hospitals, and except for the daily reading of the

> list of the returnees and looking for their lost relatives and fighting for a little food, nothing interests them. They are totally paralyzed.[4]

Most returnees presented a depressed and lethargic persona, but the returnees would emerge from the "chrysalis of ugliness."[5] Kertész was among the 82,144 Hungarian Jews who returned in 1945. The surviving Hungarian Jewish population was demographically distorted. In Budapest the working aged men were taken to forced labor, so the surviving families often lacked providers. In the countryside the women, children, and elderly were most likely to die in the concentration camps leaving a disproportionate number of single men. The proportion of children, ages 0–15, in the Jewish population had dropped to one-third of prewar levels. Sixty percent of the returnees were women; 35 percent men, and five percent were children.[6] The need for a companion was overwhelming. The average family size was only 1.7 persons. Returning Jews were lonely, and survivors were generally young, single, and eager to seek partners.

Many Hungarians, anxious about loved ones still imprisoned in the Soviet Union looked at the returning deportees with hostility. György Parragi, a Hungarian Smallholder Party columnist evoked the old hatred: "That damned race never suffered. They came home fatter than they left... Now there are more Jews in the country than before they were taken away for a holiday."[7] The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC) distributed approximately 1,360,000 meals; over forty percent of Hungarian Jews used their public kitchens, clothing and medical aid.[8] In December 1945 the U.S. Legation warned that in Budapest daily rations were falling to an average of only 858 calories per person. An unstable currency and massive inflation exacerbated food scarcity in the city. A letter to the U.S. Legation from a teenager complained, "Why are all the food packages going to Jews, when we are more hungry and in greater need?"[9]

Jews were caught in a half-submerged discourse with a despondent, deprived, and resentful Hungarian nationalism. Gyula Illyés, populist poet-laureate, complained in his diaries that "about half a million Budapest gentiles, that would be every second citizen, had been instrumental in sheltering persecuted Jews, but the press and the Jewish community showed no gratitude for such rescue action, which in the minds of those sheltered was apparently a matter of simple moral duty requiring no special acknowledgment."[10] On the other hand, Dr. Ferenc Hevesi, Chief Rabbi at the Dohány Street temple, said: "We have the feeling of living among murderers, and I never know whether the man opposite me in the tram is not my father's or my brother's murderer."[11] István Bibó, the Peasant Party theorist, sought to reframe the discussion of national responsibility by arguing that even if Hungarians had made efforts to save or protect Jews, it clearly was not adequate. The question was how to repair society after the catastrophe. He argued against the Jewish hope that Communism with its internationalist ideology would

eliminate the underlying ethnic animosities. Bibó warned of the potential vulnerability of a Jewish population with weakened confessional affiliations. The task of forging a post-Fascist identity for Hungarians would prove, as Bibó suspected, daunting.[12]

The traumatized Hungarian Jewish community that remained was also tattered, compromised, and divided. Blame was directed at Budapest from the provinces. The official Jewish leadership claimed unity, but after the "collective tragedy," the collectivity was torn asunder. Accusations of complicity and murder were hurled at the Budapest Jewish confessional leadership. Orthodox and Hassidic provincial Jews suspected that assimilationist, urban society had knowingly abandoned them.[13] The wounds were wide open. Ill will and blame burdened society, and a myriad of wrong choices and personal weaknesses overwhelmed individuals. A sense of betrayal adhered to the essence of the individual as a Hungarian, a Jew, and a person. Personal identities became disengaged.

The formation of post-Fascist, post-Holocaust identities, the identification of Jews as Hungarians, as Jews, or neither has to be placed within the context of an identity crisis of Hungarians as a whole in the wake of total defeat. While Hungarians may have taunted Jews for their suspect patriotism, Hungarian identity was clearly at a nadir. A crisis of identity among Magyars paralleled the displaced identity of Hungarian Jews. Both were agreed that to begin anew was essential, but how to proceed was more of an open question. The country lay in total ruin, so people said, but that was merely a flowery expression. In reality the country had not perished; to the contrary "it began to live vigorously", the writer Sándor Márai suggested.[14] Those who could imagine themselves in the new society stayed. The years between 1946 and 1948 could be prosperous years for Jewish survivors in Hungary. Currency stabilization, the issue of the new currency (the forint), the winding down of the black market, repair of the transportation infrastructure, made normal commerce possible. Pent-up demand for goods allowed businessmen with nothing to lose a chance for resumed prosperity.[15] But there was a fragile underside. One Jewish vegetable and wine merchant discovered the driver of his truck had been a member of the Arrow Cross. He responded to the question of whether he had believed in Nazi ideology: "I believe in it the same way I believe what the Communists are teaching now. I believe in what I must in order to earn a living for myself and my family. I believe in what I am ordered to believe." The merchant continued to employ his driver. "I knew his secret." The driver, for his part, cautioned the merchant, "The Communists will put you behind bars... You're a gentleman who is thankful to the Russians for saving your life. You have to acknowledge, though, that you do have a capitalist soul." The driver let him know "that he had to report everything" about the merchant to the "authorities."[16]

To survive at all, to reconstruct one's identity, or to leave were all age-bound categories. The young went home; the old stayed put. Some stayed because they

found connections back in Hungary and determined that Budapest could be home again; others were too debilitated to start again anew. Identity was in flux, whether to stay or leave was an open question. As Viktor Karády has shown, emigration, Zionism, total assimilation, and Communism could all be understood as options or antidotes. Each required abandoning some essential aspect of individual past identities, such as language, religion, home environment, or occupation. Individuals sometimes attempted to embrace seemingly contradictory options simultaneously, such as, joining the Communist party and a Zionist youth group. It was easy for Jews and non-Jews to assume a new, or disguise an old, identity in Hungary. After all the whole of society had a dislocated identity. The Arrow Cross went underground; religion moved into a private sphere. The Communist Party wanted converts.

"Dissimilation from Magyarism" would have entailed a "burdensome self-denial." Kertész was bound to his mother tongue. The compulsion to Magyarize was strong. Budapest, at the very least, provided the comfort of the familiar and a community of others having shed the same identities in similar ways.[17] For many Budapest Jews being inconspicuous had become a life-saving reflex. Invisibility and suspicion were key responses to the immediate postwar chaos. In Hungary many who had survived by submerging in the wider gentile population made complete their assimilation. Large numbers of Jews withdrew their names from the Jewish rolls; name changes were ubiquitous, and in 1949 intermarriage reached 37 percent. This "laying down the burden of Judaism" was an updated version of assimilationism.[18] The disproportionate number of Jews who left Hungary in 1956 suggests that the conversation within Budapest Jewry about whether to stay or emigrate continued in a subterranean fashion during the era of Stalinism in Hungary.

In the aftermath of World War II, Hungarians, Hungarian Jews, German Hungarians, and other subjects of Trianon Hungary hurried to shed inconvenient associations and scrambled to assume new identities. These new identities shared an iconic quality with pronounced normative characteristics: the Soviet Man, Zionist kibbutznik, or Americanized consumer. The Cold War interrupted the sorting out process of postwar Hungarian culture and politics, and rigidified the options for the remaining Hungarian Jewry. After the Stalinist takeover in Hungary the border was no longer porous. For those who remained in Hungary – Jew and non-Jew – this meant being stuck with the last of the many identities they had assumed, that of Communist subject.

The search for a post-Fascist Hungarian identity settled into a seemingly slavish imitation of Moscow and among Budapest Jewry a flight from bourgeois norms. The years of transience, flux, and identity shifts were overshadowed, because these three years of extraordinary movement of peoples were followed by forty-three years of immobility, with a brief hiatus in the fall of 1956. Yet, identity was less resolved than stylized, frozen in place. The Communist spiritual prison,

Kertész noted, demanded a certain pantomime of its occupants and dispensed with the obligation to define any "authentic" national persona. In the Kádár era Jewishness was submerged in Hungary, but the intelligentsia and the public at large compensated with a presumed sixth sense about Jewish identity. The "Jewish question" lived somewhere between underground and a circle of innuendo. Some surviving deportees knew who they were, or where they had been, but managed public lives successfully in public silence about their Jewishness. Others determined to obliterate the suffering and danger of the memory of Auschwitz for their progeny, but Kertész concluded that no Jew could escape his Jewishness. As the memoirist of Auschwitz, Kertész complained of his marginal sales and rejections by the publishing mills of Goulash communism. Kertész was alienated from the intelligentsia. Yet in *Kaddish* at the party with the green carpet, Kertész trumped them all, because he had been to Auschwitz, and because he went to his room every day to write about Auschwitz. It was not a martyrdom anymore; rather, it was a consignment to limitations and the boredom of a choked conversation about the Holocaust that preoccupied him in the Kádár era.

The patchwork and fluidity of Hungarian Jewish identity suggests that identity may be quite opportunistic. Certainly, more caution is needed in the general trend to attach agency and motivational drive to proclamations of identity, however heartfelt. A "hard" concept of identity that suggests a core to one's personality, nationality, or ethnicity fails the postmodern test for fluidity and multiplicity, while a "soft" concept trails off in a miasma of overlapping and contradictory identifications. Identity is a term that has overreached, claiming too many holdings.

Yet for the historian, the concept of identity is tethered to this period of the aftermath of World War II. It is precisely Kertész's adolescent age group for which it had most immediate significance. The confusion of displaced identities in the aftermath prompted Erik Erikson in the 1940s to universalize the "identity crisis" as a central contemporary problem. Erikson's own identity crisis revolved around the contrast between his Scandinavian features and his Jewish upbringing. His work, of course, focused on adolescents, a life-stage denied by the war and concentration camp experience that had disassembled society into adults, who could work or make war, and children or the old, who could not. The central tension of Imre Kertész's novel *Fateless* is that its adolescent protagonist chooses to move step-by-step through the conditions demanded by his identity as defined by others. His identity had been impressed upon him and had become depersonalized.

Once Hungary's relation to the West became fluid after 1989, the scramble for identities became active and public once again. With the collapse of Eastern European Communism, the real anomaly seems to have been the era of forced identity choices of either/or, either here or there. In Hungary there is a new Jewish

self-awareness, a discovery of Jewishness, where self-deception or parental decisions had created a chasm of information. Today finger pointing abounds.

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NARRATIVES AND FRAGMENTS: IMRE KERTÉSZ AND LÁSZLÓ MÁRTON[1]

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In this essay, I interpret two Hungarian novels from the field of Holocaust literature concentrating upon the problems of representation. I argue that neither Kertész nor Márton can avoid facing the question whether the challenges of remembering and representation can be bound and reflected in a literary form. Past events are repeatedly narrated in present tense in both novels. For Márton, the fragments of narration do not constitute a story, and the invasion of imaginative elements provokes the conventional frames of depicting historical facts in an epistemological horizon. On the other hand, in *Fateless* storytelling emphasises the inconceivable character of the Holocaust, and Kertész's work sheds light on philosophical paradoxes beyond epistemology. In this sense these two novels prove to be different but connected forms of Holocaust literature.

Keywords: contemporary literature, epistemology, fragmentarisation, Holocaust literature, Hungarian literature, imagination, irony, memory, narratology, remembering, representation

Let me start with a commonplace: it is pretty hard not to speak at all. The simpler it seems to be, the more difficult it becomes. What is to be done, i.e., spoken, if there is nothing to talk about; or if there is something to refuse to say; or if there is no one to talk to. If I were a socio-linguist, I would argue that these situations are not rare in the least. Now, I am just turning to one situation, to one particular case, which, however, might prove to be an extreme and radical root of these otherwise everyday phenomena: the Holocaust. Probably, it is not necessary to explain thoroughly why human language is insufficient in this context. So what I would like to deal with now is speaking in its most elementary sense. And since I have to write about two Hungarian narrative works, I will place the significantly differing points of view in the center of my interest.

It might not be without importance that the main characters with whom the points of view (at least three, because it is divided into two in László Márton's novel) are connected are young people. Presumably the reason should not be sought in the dramatic or even pathetic emotional effect that can be reached by de-

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picting the torments and the killing of innocent children. It could be much more important that the horizon of a child is much closer to the present – which is the dominant grammatical verb tense in the novels – and cannot be conceived of as a horizon based on broad historical experience. Of course, this raises the question of memory.

The elimination of memory can be regarded as a constituent part or goal of genocide. On the one hand, it refers to the break of religious tradition in which God reveals himself to his chosen people. On the other hand, it can be connected with the difficulty of remembering. If there are no significant acts or rich personal histories behind names, the reconstructive potential of remembrance becomes seriously limited, while the chance of unperceived forgetting rapidly increases. And young people usually have not had enough time to play a remarkable role in history. In this sense, what is at stake in László Márton's *Shadowy Main Street* is partly to reconstitute the "unlived" lives of its two main characters and several others who were killed at very young age and had no time to leave real tracks.[2] They are like shadows that have no perceivable bodies, only an obscure contour.

> Az árnyas főutca nem azért árnyas, mert árnyat adó fák szegélyezik, hanem azért, mert árnyak mutatkoznak mindkét oldalán, emberi lények árnyai.
>
> (The shadowy main street is not shadowy because it is bordered by trees that provide shade but because shadows appear on both of its sides, the shadows of human beings.)[3]

In the case of the *Fatelessness*[4] the autobiographical connotations somewhat palliate the question of tracelessness in order to emphasize a not less disturbing one: the young narrator's world of life reflects upon the weakness of European culture and tradition. György Köves, who is the protagonist and narrator of the novel, accommodates to and accepts the new rules of, so to speak, his life in the death camps. These small steps of a cruel "socialization" turn the old belief in progress on its head and reveal the darker implications of Enlightenment, i.e., the effective industrialization of killing. From this perspective, *Fateless* can be read as an anti-*Bildungsroman,* which underscores the failure of the intended goals in European, especially in modern European, history. The conceivable grasping of this "step by step" accommodation has two narrative conditions. The youthful main character has much less knowledge of either the noble or the wicked elements of its tradition, whereby on the one hand the personal interpretation of the chain of events and the distinction between intentions become uncertain. On the other hand the narrative point of view should be drawn near to the character instead of becoming a reflexive retrospective narration. The oscillation between the narrated past and the grammatical present has already been established in the first sentence, "Ma nem mentem iskolába." [Today I did not go to school.][5] Here the

word "today" refers to the first day of the story and not to the time of narration. The last sentences of the novel – "Igen, erről kéne, a koncentrációs táborok boldogságáról beszélnem nékik legközelebb, ha majd kérdik." [Yes, about this, about the happiness of concentration camps I should talk to them next time, if they ask me.] – are also in the present of the character and turn the usual hierarchy of narrated events and narration upside down. The act of narration is unfolded as the uncertain future implied in and supposed by the narrated "present". So the world of death camps is not only represented but (re)presented during the narration. And for death, as it is, it denies what would be present, this contradiction gives grounds for the ironic character of the text: everything is living just for the sake of being eliminated. Although Márton's story, with the exemption of some fragments, comes to an end before the deportation, and thus avoids depicting the sharp oxymoron of "life in death", the narrator's reflective comments establish a similar historical and even philosophical background emphasizing the contradictions of assimilation to an anti-Semitic society.

The role of the dominant present tense in *Shadowy Main Street* is different from Kertész's novel but is similarly related to the two major points of view. The starting point of Márton is a – fictive or non-fictive[6] – collection of photos that has been lost and that no one has seen since the war. At the end of the novel the narrator sees only the white back sides of the photos running away in a river. In general, the fate of this collection might be read as an allegory of the Holocaust, and significantly similar to the shadows of being that actually exist on the border of remembering and forgetting, being and non-existence. This frame of the narration lays stress upon the activity of imagination in remembrance. In the most elementary sense the separate photographs must be connected so that a story-line can be sketched. Although *Shadowy Main Street* consists of different anecdotes without close references to one another, even this very limited narrative frame could not be implemented – explicitly during the first pages – if the creativity of imagination was full of numbness. Moreover, the re-creation of the missing photo-collection also raises the almost arbitrary imaginative feature of narration. Finally, the arbitrariness, which is the most provocative component of Márton's poetics, establishes the possibility of narrating the lives of some characters after the Holocaust. In other words, to create a fictive world, which is invaded by the traces of Holocaust, nevertheless in which some part of what in fact happened is rewritten. The creation of a new world might happen in the present or by bringing about another present outside of history. In this fictive world, imaginative space and time, the events are compressed and accumulated. The novel includes one day (from the late morning to the evening), one year (from spring to the late winter), and about ten years (from the middle of the 1930s up to 1944) as different aspects of the same narrative world. Considering the parallelism of times, we can understand how the lifetime of some characters can be changed. If they are present on one

time-level, they can also be present on the parallel time-levels, at least, as shadows, or transitional beings. Of course, the intention of this poetical decision is not to change and rewrite history. On the contrary, its goal is to create the conditions for remembering people whom one can hardly remember,

> Ha felidézzük a történteket, úgy emlékezésbe menekülő életünkkel, ha pedig hagyjuk kárba veszni a történeteket, úgy feledésbe menekülő életünkkel járulunk a magunk módján hozzá, hogy ne történjék semmi. Vagy bezárkózunk a pillanatba, és az elmúlás káprázatként zajlik észrevétlenül, vagy úgy menekülünk az előző pillanatból a következőbe, ahogy az éjjeli lepke repül egyre szűkülő körökben a gyertyaláng felé; vagy pedig történetek szövögetőjeként, anekdoták ügyes kidomborítójaként járjuk az emlékezés nyomvonalait, ahogyan a háló küllőin és körein a keresztespók szaladgál.
>
> (If we recall what has happened, then by our life that escapes into remembrance, and if in turn we let the stories become wasted, then by our life that escapes to oblivion, by all means – in our own way – we help to make sure that nothing will happen. Either we lock ourselves in the moment and the passing of time happens as an illusion without being observed, or we escape to the next moment from the previous one as the moth flies toward the candlelight in narrowing circles; or we follow the traces of remembering as weavers of stories, accentuating anecdotes cleverly as the spider runs on the spokes and circles of its net.)[7]

The fictive (conditional) modality of the stories narrated in *Shadowy Main Street* always becomes conspicuous partly by the frequent ironic discontinuity of the fragmented story-telling. What is narrated is mainly narrated with the aim of showing those inhuman sides of the Holocaust that cannot be rendered perceptible by any language. It results in the permanent ironic withdrawal of what has just been told.

The ambivalent creativity of Márton's imagination is legitimized by the point of view. On the one hand, the shadows by which the main street becomes peopled cannot be called into existence; they erode and finally annihilate the frame of narration that borrowed their perceivable being. On the other hand, Márton invented a strange and special narrative position to account for and justify the provocative power of his method. The narrator – when he/she establishes the governing rules of narration at the beginning – resists the temptation either to hide himself/herself behind the voice of a character, or to look at the events through the eyes of a figure. Instead, the narrator wants to read in and from the glance of their characters of whom the unseen or invisible photos were taken. This unusual and dialogical position of Márton's narrator enhances either the reality of the victims or the striking function of imagination. The re-creation of forever lost possibilities is for the sake of nothing else but to sharpen the opposite side: the total lack of possibilities.

While the fragmentary and allegorically disintegrating narration of what could have happened is far from the academic perspective of historical studies – neither Kertész's nor Márton's novel can be read as a history book – I cannot avoid mentioning a parallel idea of fine arts, i.e. the works of László Fehér, a contemporary Hungarian painter with close connections to the Hungarian Jewish tradition. After his early hyper realistic period he began to move away from photographic portrayal, and since the middle of the 1980's in his pictures transparent and bodiless figures are delineated, whose contours let us see what is behind them. Their existence seems to be only transitional in the field of being.

If I had to find a non-literary analogy of *Fateless* then instead of fine arts I would rather turn towards music, the continuous development of one theme from another, the next notes form the former ones. By the continuity of Kertész's narration the present tense as well as the conditional form has a different meaning from Márton's narrative poetics. For Kertész conditionality serves as a tool to make the Holocaust domestic, a historical event that fits into the sequence of other events. By the reintegration of modern history, the wounds of time, the traumatic tears in the texture of history, could be healed and in a sense forgotten. But the current of the narrative action does not allow a still point of view from which human history could be structured and the unsolvable paradoxes such as the happiness of death camps reject any unifying perspective. The present of the narration is also that of the interpretation which has no end. Even if we have memories, these are getting alienated without the unceasing act of remembering. In Márton, memory is not presupposed but – partly by its absence – established. In the horizon of *Fateless* the Holocaust needs to be present and cannot be exceeded because all of its explanations, all the experiments to grasp it and handle it as a part of past history, must be repeatedly reinterpreted. There are no remaining traditions on which a certain perspective could be based.

To sum up briefly, in comparing these two Hungarian Holocaust novels, one is not able to draw general conclusions about the historical or poetic possibilities of Holocaust literature. Nevertheless, they might provide an insight into the difficulties of representation and conventions of reading from either historical or poetical points of view. The fact that Kertész had a personal experience in the Holocaust, while Márton was born after World War II, raises the question of whether this circumstance has a significant impact upon the literary character of their works. I have argued that neither of them can avoid facing the problem of representation and remembering. For Kertész, story telling is permanently intermingled with the present tense that emphasizes not only the importance of remembering but the intellectual inconceivability of the Holocaust. In Márton's *Shadowy Main Street* the deeply problematic character of representation is more crucial and obvious. The fragments of narration do not constitute a more or less clear story line, and the transgressive invasion of imaginative elements provokes the conventional frames

of depicting historical facts. Besides the fast and continuous shifting from tragic to ironic modality and back, it leads to the build-up of an epistemological horizon in which the Holocaust is not a mere historical data among other past events. *Fatelessness* – neither ignoring nor concentrating on epistemological questions – seems to assume a philosophically paradoxical point of view that does not supply the readers with answers, but sheds light on questions that might be asked beyond epistemology. In this sense these two novels can be conceived of as different but connected forms of Holocaust literature; forms which strengthen each other's influence in this new century.

Notes

1 A short preliminary remark on László Márton, who is not well known in the English speaking world and whose works have not been translated into English extensively yet, might prove to be useful. He is a middle aged Hungarian writer who has already written more than ten books, mainly novels.

2 Without giving a complete list, I only refer to some of the more detailed criticisms: Péter Balassa: "A leírhatatlan pillantás" (Indescribable glance), in *Törésfolyamatok* (The widening of the cracks) (Budapest: Csokonai Kiadó, 2001), 89–96; István Margócsy: "Márton László: Árnyas főutca" (László Márton: Shadowy Main Street) *2000* (2001/2): 62–67; Gyula Rugási: "Háromezer összepréselt nap" (Three thousand compressed days), *Holmi* (2000/5), 603-609.

3 László Márton: *Árnyas főutca* (Shadowy main street) (Pécs: Jelenkor Kiadó, 1999), 7. (All of the translations are mine.)

4 For further bibliography see the monograph of Péter Szirák, *Imre Kertész* (Pozsony: Kalligram Kiadó, 2003).

5 Imre Kertész's works on the web: www.irodalmiakademia.hu

6 Márton later admitted that the photos are real: "A lovak kihaltak. Márton Lászlóval beszélget Nagy Boglárka" (The horses are extinct), *Jelenkor* (2001/12), 1296–1298.

7 L. Márton: *op. cit.*, 49. The translation is almost impossible not only because of the difficult sentence structure but the play with words. In other contexts, the Hungarian word *kár* (damage) can be connected with the words *kór* (disease) and *kor* (age or epoch), which can be easily read as key-words of the novel.

THE APPROPRIATION OF NEW CUSTOMS

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This article examines the origins of Valentine's Day and traces the history of its evolution from ancient times to the present day. It offers a comparison of the various customs associated with this day in different parts of Europe and the world. Describing in detail the process through which the contemporary rituals surrounding Valentine's Day were imported into Hungary, the article raises questions concerning the practice of transplanting customs from one culture to another.

Keywords: Valentine's Day, rose, heart, Cupid, love

Folklorists cannot help but feel fortunate when they find themselves in the unusual position of being able to examine, both in time and space, the first appearance of a particular set of customs and the process of their dispersion. It is another question whether we, as Hungarians, have anything in common with the customs in question and the tradition they represent. Are not the already existing occasions on which young people express their interest in one another sufficient? Is it necessary to transplant into our culture a new set of customs, one foreign to Hungarian – or Central European – traditions? This essay examines – though given its length not exhaustively – precisely these questions.

The most important and essential symbol of the customs surrounding Valentine's Day is the red heart, which appears in bouquets, in central spots on Valentine's Day cards, and, around the middle of February, in store windows as a crucial attention grabber. Folklorist Mihály Hoppál has written a significant article entitled *Tulip and Heart,* which deals with those symbols that occupy a prominent place in Hungarian folk art (Hoppál 1990). Of all the Valentine's Day symbols it is the heart that plays the most important role. We can find the explanation for this in the essay by Hoppál.

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Naming the tradition

The day to which the customs described in this article are tied is February 14. It is dedicated to the memory of an old Christian martyr, Valentine. The corresponding name in Hungarian is "Bálint", which has been used both as a first name and as a family name in Hungary. In 1522 it was, according to ecclesiastical records, the most popular name, but it remains popular even today (Bálint 1977: 220). In various regions of the country there are different traditions associated with this day. The four-volume work *Magyarság Néprajza* [Ethnology of the Hungarians] devotes only a short essay to this day, informing us that, "It is a good day on to which to have geese, ducks, chicken, etc. sit on their eggs, and also the day on which sparrows begin to mate." (Szendrey 1933–1937: IV: 327) Sándor Bálint's essay, on the other hand, gives a good summary of the customs and superstitions surrounding Valentine's Day (Bálint 1977: 220–223).

In Christian history there are two (or rather, as we shall later see, perhaps three) significant Valentines: the Roman martyr and the Bishop of Passau. These two figures were often confused, particularly in territories where German was spoken. Hungarian traditions focus on the Bishop of Passau. Evidence for this can be found in calendars and missals from the Middle Ages. They observed his name day and attributed healing powers to him. This is why, for instance, the elderly women of Gyöngyöspata, who suffered from epilepsy, prayed to Saint Valentine. Those struck with this illness promised that for the rest of their lives they would fast on this day. We know of others who, on this day, did not feed their herds until noon, while the elderly stayed in bed until mid-day prayers. In other places Valentine's Day was associated not with healing powers but rather with the power to preempt misfortune. In Hőgyész the stone masons attended mass, where they prayed that they not fall from the high scaffolds. In Cserszegtomaj farmers would walk around their vineyards in order to keep both thieves and birds away. In Elek not only do they not have geese, ducks, chicken, etc. sit on their eggs on Valentine's Day, they refrain from doing this throughout the year on whatever day of the week Valentine's Day happens to fall on that year. The people of Hangony say that on Valentine's Day the wild dove returns, marking the coming of spring. In the village of Szil, in the region around the Rába river, the people believe that Valentine is the patron saint of sparrows, since it is around Valentine's Day that the weather begins to improve. According to Croatian folk beliefs it is on Valentine's Day that birds hold their weddings (Bálint 1977: 220–223). I have not come across any customs concerning fertility that are exclusive to Valentine's Day. One searches our proverbs in vain for the significance of this name and day. The collection of Ede Margalits, which is based on András Dugonics' novel *Etelka,* offers three sayings. The first is, "Fancy, like Valentine's breeches", which means frilly and pompous speech. The other two are "He fears it like sick Valentine fears for

his hair" and "Valentine was overjoyed when his hair grew out". The explanation for the last two lies in the tale of a certain Valentine who, after suffering a high fever, closed all the doors and windows for fear that his hair would fall out. (Margalits 1896: 45). In the collection of Gábor O. Nagy we find only the first two examples. (O. Nagy 1966: 68). All three sayings constitute observations drawn from a single story, and none of them has come into common usage. If we examine the various collections we see that, as has happened in many cases, these sayings have passed from one collection to another. They are absent, however, from the spoken language, and therefore cannot be said to constitute a part of the culture's folklore. Based on these observations we could say that, although there is hardly an abundance of superstitions, customs, or habits associated either with the name Valentine or Valentine's Day, it would nevertheless not be justifiable (though perhaps understandable) to give a new name to the new custom. There is considerable ambivalence concerning the proper Hungarian name for the new customs surrounding Valentine's Day. There are those who use the Hungarian name, calling it simply it "Bálint Nap" ("nap" means day in Hungarian). In the monthly magazine *Gyöngy* (Pearl), for example, which appeals primarily to young women, one reads about "Bálint day pastries" (*Gyöngy* 2002: 2: 50–52). There are others, however, for example *Hölgyvilág* (Women's World), who refer to it as "Valentin Nap." It is perhaps indicative of the prevailing ambivalence that in the above cited edition of *Gyöngy* there is another article in which the word "Valentin" is used to refer to Valentine's Day, instead of the Hungarian "Bálint" (*Gyöngy* 2002: 2: 45). The customs surrounding Valentine's Day are spread throughout the English speaking world, and in English the word has come to be used not merely as a proper name but also as a noun, meaning beloved or lover. It is the intention of Ági Guba, the professional florist who brought this custom to Hungary, to popularize the name Valentine's Day, since according to her the Hungarian Bálint Day refers to something else. However, as the aforementioned examples have shown, there is hardly unanimity concerning this question. People will use the name that suits their fancies best, that is when they bother to give any attention to these questions in the first place.

A short history of the customs

It is worthwhile to sketch an overview, even if only in broad strokes, of the various changes that this day, and the beliefs and customs associated with it, have gone through. The ancient Greeks, during the month of weddings, celebrated the goddess Juno on February 14, whom they thought of as the sanctifier of weddings. According to legend she held her wedding feast with Zeus on this day. In the familiar depiction of her she is shown holding a granite apple in one hand – the sym-

bol of fertility – while in the other she holds a king's scepter, on which sits a cuckoo bird, the bird that proclaims the coming of spring. The Romans held the celebration of Lupercalia on February 14, which was dedicated to welcoming the arrival of spring and with it fertility, renewal, and cleansing. This was the most important day of celebration for the Roman god Faunus. His priests would dress in goatskins and offer sacrifices in a sanctified cave on the hillside of the Palatines. This day, a joyful celebration of the coming of spring, then became the day of the martyred Saint Valentine. Ecclesiastical history tells of Valentine, who dwelt in Rome and was beheaded by Emperor Claudius II sometime between 268 and 270. According to the legend, Valentine wanted to convert Claudius to Christianity, but his attempts were unsuccessful, and he was handed over to Aster, one of the emperor's officers, to be executed. However, when Valentine cured Aster's daughter of blindness, not only did Aster accept the Christian faith, but so did his friends. This angered the emperor, who had them put to death. The legends tell of another Valentine as well, who, in the third century, suffered a similar fate. He is mentioned as the Bishop of the city of Interamna (today Terni). His miraculous powers of healing were famous far and wide. He is credited, for example, with healing the crippled daughter of the Greek scholar Craton, something which prompted Craton, as well as several of his acquaintances, his student, and even the governor of the city to adopt the Christian faith. He too was imprisoned for his faith and later executed on the order of a prefect by the name of Placidus. According to K. E. White several historians share the view that these two Valentines were one and the same person (White 1993: 27). Whatever the case, there are numerous legends associated with this (these) martyr(s) that not only tell of Valentine's miraculous healing powers but also attribute to him the role of the guardian of lovers. There is one legend according to which the bishop reconciles quarreling lovers with a rose. According to another story the bishop, awaiting his execution in prison, prays to God to restore the sight of the daughter of the prison guard. Valentine sends a farewell letter to the girl signed, "from your Valentine". He died on February 14, so this became Valentine's Day. When people give each other flowers and gifts on this day, they do it to express their love for one another. In the France and England of the Middle Ages this custom was particularly popular among lovers perhaps precisely because it fell in the middle of the second month of the year (February 14), the day on which according to folk beliefs birds began to mate. According to popular belief, the first Valentine's Day card was sent by Charles, Prince of Orleans, to his wife from the tower of London, where he had been imprisoned in 1314 in the wake of the battle of Agincourt.

Legends tell of another Valentine as well. He lived sometime between 430 and 475 AD, though the exact date is not known. According to the legend, it was his desire to settle in Passau in order to try to convert the people of the city. After being chased off three times he retreated to the Alps, where he died. Though we do

not know why, allegedly it was principally epileptics that believed in his healing powers. It was for this reason that in the Middle Ages many epileptics wore Valentine's crosses around their necks to frighten off the disease. In territories where Hungarian was (is) spoken it is this understanding of Valentine that became widespread. It is for this reason that one does not find among Hungarian superstitions and customs concerning this day tokens related to romantic love.

A description of the tradition

It is not my intention to give an exhaustive overview of this tradition. I intend only to examine its emergence and characteristics in Hungary. It would be interesting, of course, to look at the changes this tradition has undergone. The spread of this tradition to the farthest corners of the globe is not, presumably, due to the ever stronger need to express love, but rather to the increasingly commercial nature of our world. Indeed, it is hardly celebrated in the same way everywhere. In the United States schoolchildren give each other commercially printed cards – which are different both in size and quality of paper from "adult" cards. Boys give them to girls and girls to boys, though sometimes girls give them to girls, occasionally not revealing who it was who gave the card. A child's standing in the class is to an extent determined by how many Valentine's Day cards he/she receives. It is not only lovers who send each other Valentine's Day cards. Children give them to their parents and grandparents and vice versa. It is also customary to give flowers, chocolate, and small gifts. The red rose and red heart are indispensable accoutrements. In Japan they celebrate two Valentine's Days: one on which boys send cards to girls and another, a week later, on which girls send cards to boys. In Australia, as well as in France and the other countries of Europe, Valentine's Day has remained an occasion for young lovers. It has not spread to include family members. In Italy, especially in Sicily, as well as in England, Belgium, and other countries, the tradition is to greet the first person of the opposite sex you meet on that day as your Valentine and to exchange gifts with that person.

I mention as a side note that in Great Britain not only is the day of February 14 designated as a time for predictions concerning love, but the preceding evening is as well. In the northern parts of England and the southern parts of Scotland it is customary for an equal number of boys and girls to spend the evening of February 13 together. Everyone writes his/her name on a small strip of paper. They put the papers into two small bags, the names of the boys in one and the names of the girls in the other, and everyone pulls out a name. You then become the Valentine of the person whose name you pulled or who pulled your name. It is an unambiguous portent of marriage if two people pull each other's name. Sometimes they pull

names from the bags three times, and if someone draws the same name three times in a row it is a sure sign of marriage.

There is another well-known tradition concerning Valentine's Day eve. There are those who hold that before going to bed you must write the names of potential spouses on strips of paper. These you must throw into a pot of boiling water and whichever name you read first will be your Valentine the next day. In England February 14 is, according to tradition, the day on which birds begin to mate, which explains how this day became the day of lovers.

This poem from 1648 captures this idea:

> Oft have I heard both youths and virgins say
> Birds choose their mates, and couple too, today
> But by their flight I never can divine
> When I shall couple with my Valentine
>
> *Herrick: Hesperides* (Knightly 1987: February 13–14).

It is perhaps an indication of the popularity of this day that Shakespeare makes reference to it in *Hamlet*. Ophelia tells of what happens on this day:

> To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day,
> All in the morning betime,
> And I a maid at your window,
> To be your Valentine.
> Then up he rose, and donn'd his clothes,
> And dupp'd the chamber-door;
> Let in the maid, that out a maid
> Never departed more.

Another superstition recorded in England was that the first person of the opposite sex to see you on Valentine's Day will become your spouse. However, should the person you encounter not be the right person you are allowed to close your eyes until the right person does come along (Knightly 1987: February 13–14). A similar popular tradition was that young girls could tell who their future husbands would be based on the birds that they saw on Valentine's Day. If a girl spotted a redbreast robin, her husband would be a mariner. If she saw a sparrow, he would be a poor man, but they would be happy. A goldfinch meant a rich husband, while a white dove meant a kind husband. The worst was a woodpecker, because that meant the girl would be an old maid.

In England traditions that have been practiced for centuries are still alive today. However, it is only in the last decades that these traditions have spread to other parts of the world. People are not always enthusiastic about these ever more prevalent customs. In India, for example, the leader of the Hindu nationalist party declared that his followers would burn Valentine's Day cards, just as they had done

the year before. In their view this new fashion stands in contradiction to the cultural and moral traditions of India and therefore should be condemned (*Magyar Hírlap* February 14, 2002, 16). They planned to disrupt open celebrations of Valentine's Day and to vandalize store displays. What actually happened on this day, the accounts do not mention any such activities. They mention only that despite these threats in Bombay balloons decorated with hearts and various other Valentine's Day decorations could be seen in virtually every storefront. The celebration of this day spread fairly quickly in part because in numerous cultures it is around this time of year that people welcome the coming of spring.

The appearance of the tradition in Hungary

In Hungary this tradition has a fairly recent history. Its appearance can in fact be tied to one person. It was Ági Guba, the director of the Hungarian Professional Florists' Association, who decided to bring this tradition to Hungary. The first introduction occurred in 1990 in the Congressional Center in Budapest, where on February 14 a large exhibition was held that emphasized Valentine's Day decorations and the bouquets made for this occasion. Even on this first occasion the exhibition was attended by candy and chocolate vendors, as well as craftsmen, who peddled carved figurines and other gifts appropriate to Valentine's Day. Falling between Christmas and Women's Day (which was brought to Hungary under communism in an attempt by the regime to depict itself as progressive), February is an uneventful month from the point of view of giving gifts. There is little business for flower stores and gift stores are empty. Valentine's Day fills this otherwise slow period. It is a new occasion and a new opportunity for gift giving. However, it was not the founder's intention simply to increase sales and improve business for flower stores. According to Guba's conception, Valentine's Day should be an occasion when anyone can give a stem or a bouquet of flowers to someone else, creating joy and good will. With this in mind she decided that every year she would give a so-called "love bouquet" to someone whose actions, in her view, exemplify love. It was in 1991 that she gave the first such bouquet. I will not list all of the recipients, but the list ranges from President Árpád Göncz to U. S. Ambassador Nancy Goodman-Brinker, and includes such names as Róbert Koltay, György Faludy, and Gábor Presser, as well as Klári Tolnay and, in the name of all the victorious athletes of the Barcelona Olympics, Pál Schmitt. This "love bouquet" is always done in the name of the Hungarian Professional Florists' Association, but it is always Ági Guba who does it and who presents it to the recipient as part of a small celebration. Although this event always gets a great deal of publicity, this kind of gift-giving has not caught on. Valentines' Day trends, however, have caught on. Today they are familiar throughout the country. Valentine's Day

is less significant than Women's Day, the custom learnt under socialism according to which an employer or director at a place of work gives flowers to female employees (not a red carnation, just a simple snow-flower), but it is present, especially among those under the age of thirty-five.

How is this tradition practiced? Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect is that as of yet there is no established ritual in Hungary. There are, however, a few indispensable items, namely the red heart and flowers. To this one might add any number of other items, for example chocolate – if possible wrapped in the form of a heart or, if this is not possible, in paper decorated with red hearts, balloons decorated with red hearts, or other appropriate gifts, such as a coffee mug with a red heart on it and perhaps an inscription, a plush stuffed animal with its lips pursed to form a heart, a bear with red fur, a handbag for cosmetics, stationary, colored paper, and any number of other trinkets. What is essential is that it have a heart on it, indicating that it was both made and purchased for this day. Why is this heart motif so important? What does it signify today?

We give people gifts in order to bring them pleasure, but the objects that we give always bear some sort of meaning. As Károly Kós writes in regards to the old presses used to wash and iron clothes, "The principle characteristic of the objects in which the social life of the folk manifests itself is that it is personal and that each such object *wants to express* something" (quoted in Hoppál 1990: 7). What, then, do the many red hearts want to express on this day?

I agree with the celebrated writer Aladár Dobrovits when he says, "Nothing takes form in a culture on its own from one day to the next. Everything has an origin." Dobrovits observes, perspicaciously, that "to invent symbols, create them from nothing, this is not possible" (Hoppál 1990: 50).

One can explain the phenomenon that virtually every Valentine's Day gift is in some way related to the heart by examining the meanings attributed to the heart by numerous cultures. Again, I cite Hoppál, who writes, "on the basis of cultural/historical information drawn from dictionaries of symbols the heart motif is clearly connected to the symbols of love. It is the emblem of love, but also of understanding, devotion, and joy in the most divergent cultures" (Hoppál 1990: 50). Therefore, it seems natural that this emblem would be essential on the day designated for lovers. In numerous cultures, for example in Hungary or in the United States, the flower is of similar significance. In particular the red rose is symbolic of love. It is commonplace in Hungarian folk poetry and in everyday speech for someone to refer to a lover as "my rose", as Lajos Vargyas notes in the fifth volume of *Magyar Néprajz* (Hungarian Ethnology). According to him the vibrant color and strong scent of the rose explain its role as the emblem of love. One comes across the rose in many folksongs and sayings:

> Hej rózsa, rózsa, ékös vagy,
> Hajnali csillag-fényös vagy,
> Egyenes vagy, rózsám, mint a nád,
> Néköm nevelt az édesanyád.
>
> Hey rose, rose, you are a jewel
> A glittering dawn star you are
> You are straight, my rose, like the reed
> Your mother raised you for me.

Or as the symbol of love:

> Déltől estig nyillik a piros rózsa,
> S bárcsak eddig se szerettelek volna!
> Jobb lett volna az én árva szivemnek:
> Hadtam volna békit a szerelemnek.
>
> From dawn till eve opens the red rose,
> If only I hadn't loved you at all!
> It would have been better for my orphaned heart
> Had I but left love in peace.

These two examples explain the role of these symbols on Valentine's Day (Vargyas 1988: 477–478).

There are two additional items that are not indispensable, but are common accoutrements on this day. One is the balloon, the other the figure of Cupid, who may appear as a small figurine or merely as a decoration on a postcard or on wrapping paper. For the Romans Cupid was the god of love, depicted as an attractive youth or child with wings, lute, flowers, bow, and arrows. His appearance on this day dedicated to love is therefore not unusual. Perhaps less relevant or appropriate is the balloon, which is one of the conspicuous and slightly childish elements of ever-more Americanized popular culture. A decade ago the balloon was associated with the amusement park, a farewell scene, or perhaps the marketplace. Now it has become part of the everyday, not only as part of birthday celebrations – where, ten or fifteen years ago, it wouldn't have occurred to anyone to have balloons – but even as part of an election campaign. Old women sit on benches holding ten or fifteen balloons in their hands that read, "A woman is capable of more," something which could even serve as a slogan for Valentine's Day (*Magyar Nemzet* September 2, 2002: 1). On Valentine's Day balloons appear in store windows to grab the attention of passers-by, but, as in the United States, they can be found ever more frequently accompanying flower bouquets, often in the shape of a heart but always decorated with something, red hearts or perhaps small figures. It seems significant that, in this tradition, which is even now taking form, individual tastes have not yet been relegated to the background to the same extent as in an

established tradition, yet those giving the gifts still feel it necessary to use these symbols. This is natural, however, since the individual, by seeking precisely those symbols that have been created by a community, becomes part of a symbolic system used by many and can feel him/herself part of that community. The symbols used by this person gain significance because there is a larger group, a larger community, that allows them to be their own (Bodó 1987: 61).

This tradition is, in itself, little more than another occasion to exchange gifts. In Hungary it is only young married couples or young lovers who exchange gifts on this day. We have little data suggesting that those above the age of thirty-five purchase anything for each other. Men can choose to give, along with flowers of course, perfume or one of the previously mentioned trinkets. Younger people prefer cheerful or amusing gifts, while those who are slightly older prefer slightly more serious gifts, perhaps books. Girls tend to give presents to those boys with whom they are already in a more serious relationship. They may give any sort of smaller gift. Particularly popular is the small stuffed animal, though books often provide a surprise. A young husband may get a bottle of some alcoholic beverage.

Electronic and print media play a decisive role in the evolution and dispersion of the customs associated with Valentine's Day. Daily papers write only briefly about this day, primarily about its history and dispersion (*Magyar Hírlap* February 14, 2002: 16), while in the magazines targeting the young there is an abundance of material concerning Valentine's Day. These magazines do not touch on the cultural and historical background of this day. Instead they offer personal stories, as well as tips and suggestions concerning gifts and activities. Among these are Valentine's Day recipe suggestions. In this too the heart is the central motif. The opening lines of an article entitled *Heart to Heart* cite the commonplace "the way to a man's heart is through his stomach", and just to ensure that the significance is clear the recipe suggests that the baked goods be prepared in the shape of a heart (*Gyöngy* February 2, 2002: 50–52). We find the same thing in the magazine *Hölgyvilág* (Women's World), which targets girls, where an article entitled *Szívesen kínáljuk* ("It is our pleasure to offer it to you" – a play on words in Hungarian since the word "szívesen" (gladly or with pleasure) is derived from the word "szív", meaning heart) offers recipes for heart shaped deserts (*Hölgyvilág* February 14, 2002: 20–21). The magazine entitled Gyöngy also offers gift suggestions, ranging from CDs of light music or the songs of Hungarian performers to books telling the tales of the world's most infamous lovers (*Gyöngy* February 2, 2002, 45).

The gift-giving customs associated with Valentine's Day do not allow for much imagination, especially from the man's perspective, since the list of obligatory or appropriate gifts is fairly strictly defined. There is, however, another aspect to Valentine's Day about which I have not yet spoken, namely the question of Val-

entine's Day greetings. The magazine *Hölgyvilág*, in which the writers make use of both "Valentin" and "Bálint", offers pages of suggestions concerning Valentine's Day greetings. In order to spark the reader's interest, they begin by asking well-known artists the question, "from whom are you expecting to receive a Valentine's Day card?" They receive unexpected answers to this question. For example, Iván Markó claimed to be expecting something from "the good Lord himself" (*Hölgyvilág* February 14, 2002: 5). More interesting perhaps are the some 800 greetings found printed in small letters on six pages of this magazine. These greetings are under the heading "Thank you for being mine", and they imply numerous possible relationships between the sender and the receiver, not merely that of lovers. Perhaps the most surprising is one from a five month old "Little Baby Kitti", who sends her Valentine's Day greetings to her mother. There are several greetings from grown women to parents, for example, or from a grandmother to her grandchildren. Most of the greetings, however, are intended from lovers to one another. There are ones addressed to a specific name, others with a word or phrase suggesting who the recipient might be, and still others about which it would be hard to say whether or not it will even reach the person for whom it is intended, for example, "You are the world's best man! First prize! Code Name: Blue Eyes". A similar greeting contains an element of humor: "I wish you a happy Valentine's Day my dear. To the world's most adorable blue-eyed real man! Your little sex mouse." The one who refers to himself as "Prince Imre" looks down a little at his lover: "I send word to the country hag that I love her". One comes across sugar-coated greetings, such as, "I wish my zsebröfi [pocket piggy] a joyous future, from his ever-loving zsebcicája [pocket kitty]". "Chocolate" is a little more realistic: "Eve! Watch your weight!"

Space limitations do not allow me to analyze all of these various greetings – that must wait until later – but one can observe that these texts extend far beyond the boundaries of traditional modesty, indeed, often beyond the boundaries of good taste. It is not journalistic style that creates this tone, but, more probably, general changes in common speech, a sort of affectation of promiscuity that occasionally makes the reader recoil. But this is merely part of the phenomenon. The greetings found in these magazines are not part of a tradition. The writers have nowhere to turn for models. There is no governing mechanism that might channel these writings provoked by emotion, the need to communicate, and the desire to participate. These greetings have nothing in common with the written or oral traditions of the peasantry. In this case we are dealing with an entirely new genre, and compared to this even the commonplaces inscribed on the hangings used by peasants in their kitchens (what in Hungarian is referred to as "falvédő költészet") was *literature*. The reason for this is perhaps the fact that the entire phenomenon of Valentine's Day has, in Hungary, no roots in tradition; and although the media and

the world of marketing try to tell the consumer what he/she should buy on this day, they do not say what he/she should write. We can, to an extent, consider this as something positive, since in the United States for example one can hardly find a greeting card without a text already inscribed into it. They all have some sort of text, sparing the buyer the task of having to think up something to say to his lover, mother, grandmother, etc. At the same time, however, we may find in this absence of tradition an explanation for why people don't know what or how to write on this day, because they don't know why we have these customs in the first place. The culture of any community is the sum of the information deriving from its own traditions and from foreign cultures. Presumably the preferable situation is a balance between tradition and innovation. If a civilization turns in on itself excessively, rejecting outside influences, it becomes rigid and eventually exhausts its reserves. On the other hand, if it rejects its own traditions and accepts only outside influences, it paves the way to self-surrender (Keszeg 1991: 255–258). For this reason alone it is worthwhile to give some thought to the adoption of this custom. The folklorist knows that folk poetry, and indeed all of traditional peasant culture, is the history of innovation and the adoption of new influences. Here, simply, the question becomes one of *what* and *how*. Is there not in Hungarian traditions a custom appropriate for renewal and use? Is peasant culture really "in-consumable" (to use Vilmos Keszeg's term)? Do we indeed need – it seems we do – the deluge of gaudy tripe that this custom has brought upon us in order to express our love for one another?

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BOOK REVIEW

András D. Bán: *Hungarian-British Diplomacy 1938–1941: The Attempt to Maintain Relations* (London–Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2004)

András D. Bán's monograph is a study of the relationship between a small state and a great power during a time of international conflict. It captures the last great, if tragic, moment of Hungary's diplomatic service between the two world wars, as it struggled to balance between an all-too powerful and close Germany and an all-too passive and distant Great Britain. The book, divided into two large segments, first offers a linear narrative of diplomatic history, then surveys a number of structural factors constraining and influencing choices made by the players with which the reader has become acquainted in the first part. The sections are based on years of research in Budapest, London and the Hoover Institution in California, and thus rest on a wide array of printed and archival sources.

One should, however, not be deceived by the order of things. In Bán's view, neither aspect of international relations should be accorded primacy over the other. The young Hungarian scholar, who died prematurely at age thirty-eight in 2001, clearly perceived the constant interplay between structural and political factors and players, refusing to anchor his position at any single independent variable or some preferred causal mechanism. British-Hungarian relations are meant to be understood as the complex product of historical necessities, player preferences and identities, as well as the players' perceptions of the world. Structural and political factors of this complexity and range would indeed not fit into a single narrative framework or would greatly fragment the text by the constant switches between levels of analysis. Bán's choice of method is therefore both practical and productive, as long as one keeps in mind that the two sections are meant to be understood as offering a single picture together, and their dualism represents not a division in the world itself, but a constraint in the ways the historian can capture and conceptualize his or her subject matter. But just what is this single picture Bán offers?

The cover, dominated by a drawing of the destroyed Chain Bridge (a product of desperate German attempts to defend Buda and the western bank of the Danube), captures the essence of the book: it is the story of a path and a relationship derailed by the powers of history, the narrative of a course of events foreshadowing the fate of Hungary in the Second World War. Bán was of course a reserved historian, never venturing to boldly generalize from the historical mosaic he reconstructed, yet this intimation shines through the book. Hungary, the small East Central European state, under a fiercely anti-Bolshevik and authoritarian government, is seeking to maintain some degree of freedom of movement in the crucial moment when the sharpening antagonism of the real players should lead to a tightening of alignments, balancing on the part of great power blocks and bandwagoning on that of small states. The story of Hungarian-British relations between 1938 to 1941 is in this sense the story of an anomaly that history, tragically, corrected. Dependent on Germany both economically and politically (the main aim of every Budapest government being the radical revision of the 1920 Trianon Treaty), Hungary held on

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to her ties to Britain, not without a degree of desperation, as she simultaneously failed to stop her slide towards the status of a German satellite.

The terrain chosen by Bán is therefore doubly interesting for the historian. It offers, on the one hand, an opportunity to re-historicise the era, in the sense of recreating the choices made and the context of those choices, rather than accepting, with an *ex eventu* reasoning, the outcomes that – obvious as they are – tend to cast the impression of determinism over historical processes. It also provides, on the other hand, an insight into the bureaucratic processes that yield foreign policy, revealing the fragmented, rather than monolithic, character of the respective national diplomatic establishments. For British-Hungarian relations could not have survived the first two years of the war the way they did, had a minority in the Hungarian foreign service and the political establishment not felt compelled to do everything in its power to prevent complete alignment with Germany. Their successes, however, were necessarily interim, as they ran against the grain of international events and the power shifts within the Budapest establishment alike. While these efforts may have made little difference in 1945, the postwar situation was not to be foreseen around 1940, and they must be evaluated with this in mind.

This stance may, in fact, be one of the chief virtues of the book. It reminds the student of history to free himself or herself, as best he or she can, of the knowledge derived from the ulterior temporal position of the observer, and devote considerable energies to recreating the historical situation with its complex interplay of perceptions, choices and processes. Bán's enterprise is, in this sense, true to the credo of classic historiography, seeking to capture both trend – Hungary's drift into German orbit – and the human labor as it manifests itself in history – in the efforts of diplomats of various sorts to counteract what they knew all too well to be happening.

The methodological conservatism of the book does not reveal itself to be a shortcoming of any sort. True, Bán had no interest in systematically investigating either the nature of the diplomat's perception of the world and the linguistic conventions that were as much the product of this mental image, as they were continuously recreating it. He also refrained from systematizing his findings in sketching the network he documented in the fashion of *Sozialgeschichte*. Yet these popular innovative approaches would have provided little value added, given that the aim of the research was to show how foreign policy was made by, and also formed those governing it. The chief contribution the book makes to our understanding of history is the way it captures the conflict between socio-cultural preferences and direct economic and political interests.

In the specific case on hand, as Bán reconstructs it, this interplay included, on the Hungarian side, the Budapest center of government, constrained by its revisionism and anti-Bolshevism, as well as the country's economic dependence on Germany; the thoroughly bureaucratic (in the Weberian sense of the word) diplomatic corps, and various NGOs and pressure groups operating in the field of foreign policy. Factors meriting a close look in Britain were also the establishment, interested civilian organizations and influential individuals, the Foreign Office, as well as the press and public opinion. Charting the history of communication between these players, Bán successfully recreates the foreign policy process, convincingly demonstrating that a committed minority in the Hungarian *corps diplomatique* persistently sought to enter into coalition with sections of the Budapest COG in order to hold on to a policy of balancing between powers in practice, while in theory they would have much preferred the – then utopian – British alignment of the country over bandwagoning with Germany. At the same time, Bán reconstructs with great delicacy the bureaucratic process in the Foreign Office, which never really became interested in Hungary due to its standardized procedures, which saw not the country trying to escape the German embrace, but a small state that would both economically and politically belong to the German zone of influence, and where therefore any major commitment,

such as trade and market-entry guarantees would in all likelihood prove to be an invitation for free-riding.

History has proved the FO right, chiefly due to the immediate or short-term benefits Germany was in a position to offer in the period, but also because German prestige, fed by Hitler's success story in the thirties, together with the traditional "Germanophilia" of segments of the Hungarian establishment, succeeded in undermining the legitimacy and the rationale of the balancing policy that had originated with István Bethlen's premiership in the twenties. Bán, as obvious in the above position, refuses to portray the German-Hungarian relationship as exclusively the product of Hungarian revisionism, he incorporates in his analysis the ideological and cultural affiliation of parts of the élite with Germany, if not with National Socialism specifically. He also shows that the economic ties to Britain were not quite as loose as usually – and summarily – portrayed in the literature; they in fact grew stronger during the thirties, even if Germany's leading position in Hungary's external trade was never seriously threatened.

All the minute detail presented by Bán contributes to a reevaluation of British-Hungarian ties. What used to be perceived as a forlorn hope, a utopian wish in the gigantic shadow of the Reich, is revealed as a minority alternative, albeit one that could not have mustered a winning coalition in Budapest, and the adherents of which were sober-minded enough to settle for a partial, rather than a full realization of their preferences. With this, Bán accomplishes his task of re-historicization: the British-Hungarian relationship in the period 1938–1941 is presented and analyzed in its own context, meticulously separated from both judgement and present-day knowledge. The strict adherence to the rules of his undertaking permitted Bán to modify the image of Hungarian foreign policy, showing the pro-British faction stronger than it would otherwise be supposed, yet without ever failing to document why the faction could neither represent its full program, nor muster a winning coalition in Budapest for a partial realization of it. Their failure removed the last alternative of complete alignment with Germany from the field of political consideration, sealed by Hungary's joining with the Reich in the overrunning of Yugoslavia in April 1941. At the end, the haunting image of the blown-up Chain Bridge returns to the mind of the reader, as Bán closes his work by the observation that "[e]verything that happened subsequently ... has to be seen as efforts in a situation in which Hungary was trapped ever since the spring of 1941".

How alternative is to be distinguished from utopia is hard to define, and the boundaries between the two are likely to be blurred. Yet Bán successfully presents to the reader a case where a utopia is revealed to have been an alternative at one time, albeit one that had very slim, if any, chances of being realized. It was an alternative nevertheless, since it had supporters in the establishment and Hungary possessed some degree of free movement in international relations back in 1938. The freedom of movement began to wane due to mounting German pressure and the arrival of the first payoffs for cooperation with the Reich, and so the alternative itself waned to a utopia. For this is how Bán – correctly, one might add – sees the futile wartime Hungarian attempts to preserve the semblance of cooperation with Great Britain in the eyes of the London government. It was not the desire of the moderate segments of the Hungarian establishment for cooperation that had vanished – but the freedom of movement that had still existed to some degree in 1938.

Gergely Romsics

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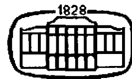

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