

## Rózsa Ignác's *Torockói gyász* ['Torockó Mourning']: Identity Beyond the Borders of Time and Space

Zoltán Abádi-Nagy

**Abstract:** Rózsa Ignác's historical novel *Torockói gyász* ['Torockó Mourning'] (1958) deals with the staggering tragedy of Transylvanian Torockó in 1702. But the referential pattern that emerges from the dramatic plot clearly points beyond eighteenth-century time and space in partly overt and mostly covert ways: to the early twentieth-century post-Trianon fate of the Hungarians in Transylvania, and beyond, to the destructive post-1945 totalitarian communist regime in Hungary, as well as to the backlash of the 1956 anticommunist and anti-Soviet revolution and war of independence. The narrative techniques of expanding early eighteenth-century time and space will be examined through the ways in which thematic threads of collective identity are woven in the novel in general, and the customs, habits, and the religious affiliation of the community are handled in particular. Theories of Jan Assmann, Michael Bamberg, David Herman, Erving Goffman, Fritz Heider and Anselm L. Strauss as well as observations of Ignác researchers such as Lajos Kántor, Gabriella F. Komáromi, and Erzsébet Dani will be used.

**Keywords:** *Transylvanian literature, Rózsa Ignác, identity, collective identity, narrative*

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Rózsa Ignác (1909-1979) was born in Kovászna, Transylvania. She was raised in post-Trianon Transylvania, her intelligence beginning to develop in the nineteen-twenties. She was an actress, a member of Budapest's National Theatre for almost a decade, as well as a popular writer, who had published ten books before 1945. But after the war the communists did not allow her work to appear and she was thus forced to write mostly for her drawer for the rest of her life. (She would not live to see the collapse of communism in 1989, unfortunately.) The damage done to her original, compassionate, and important oeuvre is still with us, and her work is still



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awaiting the critical and popular appreciation it undeniably deserves. In contemporary writer Anna Jókai's phrasing, many still "try to erase her from Hungarian literary history by the conspiracy of silence" [Az irodalom történetéből agyonhallgatással próbálják kitörölni] (Kántor 2009: 372).<sup>1</sup>

In an earlier essay (Abadi-Nagy 2015) I focused on how fictional consciousness works in Ignác's 1958 historical novel *Torockói gyász* ['Torockó Mourning'].<sup>2</sup> It meant examining the author's, the narrator's, and the characters' cognitive processing of their fictional world(s) as well as their intensive mental activities, positionings, self-positionings, and repositionings.<sup>3</sup> It was the 2015 American Hungarian Educators' Association conference theme, "Identities Beyond Borders," however, that caused me to reflect upon the subject of identity, which the novel dramatizes in much more prevailing though hidden and sophisticated ways than it appears at first sight. The Torockó drama takes place in 1702 and foregrounds what is a social confrontation between a tyrannical squire and the community of the mining town. This happens in a time when historical Transylvania is, in fact, inside Hungary's borders. But the book is, through a referential transmission, also about the tragedy of Hungarian minority identity as lived beyond the borders much later—after Trianon, when Transylvania was severed from dismembered Hungary—under the assimilative pressure of the Romanian majority; and about the tragedy of national identity as experienced under the pressure of Soviet communism, after 1945 and after the crushed anticommunist revolution of 1956. The drama has a message, then, whose validity is expanded across time, ranging from the early eighteenth into the twentieth century, and space, out of Transylvania into post-Trianon and post-1945 as well as post-1956 Hungary. The link is self-evident; the problematic of identity is a logical part and parcel of the book's fictional cognitive realm. However, this time we need to step out of the framework of cognitive narratology in order to engage complex issues related to personal,<sup>4</sup> group, and national identity. It is in the latter

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<sup>1</sup> Ignác's son, Ádám Makkai, holds degrees from ELTE (Budapest), Harvard, and Yale. He emigrated from Hungary to the US after the 1956 revolution was crushed. He is an eminent poet, linguist, translator, and college professor who was awarded the Kossuth Prize (see the overview of his career by Louise O. Vasvári (2013) in the *HCS* issue dedicated to him; <http://dx.doi.org/10.5195/ahea.2013.178>). Ignác's granddaughter and Ádám's daughter, Rebecca Makkai, is herself a recently emerged, acclaimed contemporary American writer. She authored the novel *The Borrower* (2011, the 2014 winner of the Chicago Writers Association's Fiction of the Year Award), *The Hundred-Year House* (2015, the Chicago Writers Association's Novel of the Year), and *Music for Wartime* (short stories, 2015). Her stories made it into the volumes of *Best American Short Stories* in four consecutive years.

<sup>2</sup> For a full bibliography of her works go to this website: <http://ironok.elte.hu/index.php/bibliografia/90-menu/biblicikk/128-bibliografia-i#ignacz>.

<sup>3</sup> As narratologist David Herman argues, "we make sense of our own and other minds through *positioning*" (2010: 162). Michael Bamberg's positioning analysis makes the distinction between the subject "positioning itself" and the subject "being positioned," the former being the "agent-to-world direction," the latter the "world-to-agent direction" of the "agent-world relationship" (2005: 224).

<sup>4</sup> "Personal identity" is used here in the sense that Jan Assmann (2011: 113) defines it. He distinguishes "individual and personal identity" inside what he calls "'I' identity." Personal identity is "the embodiment of all of the roles, qualities, and talents that give the individual his own special place in the social network".

frameworks that the war between the mining community of the free Székely-Hungarians, Saxons, and Romanians of Torockó all united by the cause and the rapacious landowner, backed by the Austrian commander-in-chief and his invading army, is waged. And these are the frameworks in which the theme of identity is thematized in the novel.

Transylvanian-born Ignác, who was unjustly shelved as a writer during the communist decades, was inspired to write *Torockói gyász* by Balázs Orbán's huge and seminal work of 1868: *A székelyföld leírása történelmi, régészeti, természetrajzi s népismereti szempontból* ['Székelyland: A Full Account of Her History, Archeology, Natural History, and Ethnography']. Her resulting historical novel, which was written, as she stated, "after much-much learning, reading, research" [*sok-sok tanulgatás, olvasás, kutatás után*] was based on a real story (Ignác 18; all translations of Ignác are by the author). It relates the crushing of the Torockó "miners' revolution" of 1702, the executions, the shelling of the Torockó church tower, and the deprivation of the Torockó people's rights. The orders to commit those horrible deeds were issued on location by the French general in Austrian mercenary service, Count Rabutin de Bussy, incited to do so by the scheming landlords, the Toroczkays. It served the voracious selfishness of the "fiendishly clever, powerful old woman" [*nagyeszű, hatalmas öregasszony*] (Ignác 12), the greedy widow Mrs. Toroczkay Krisztina Ürmössy and of her landowner son Mihály Toroczkay, who is constantly coveting the favor of the Austrian Emperor so as to gain enough power to force the otherwise free Torockó people into eternal serfhood. Petty-monarch Toroczkays were attempting to dupe and cheat their serfs by first safe-guarding and then hiding and finally pretending to have lost a vital document. It was King Béla IV's royal deed of gift and royal patent in the thirteenth century, later reinforced by King Matthias, granting Torockó's people freedom and free possession of their lands and mines. The Torockays had been using their power and influence to obtain judgements of non-suit against the people of Torockó, who for centuries had been resolutely and desperately filing lawsuit after lawsuit, in a series of attempts to seek their stolen "truth." The exception to the rapacious Toroczkays is the younger son, István Toroczkay, Székely Captain of Aranyosszék: he "was secretly in touch with Ferenc Rákóczi, who was languishing in the emperor's prison and whose national Kuruc captain for Transylvania he would become later, after the close of our story" [*a császári rabságban szenvedő Rákóczi Ferencsel tartott titkos összeköttetést, kinek későbben—már történetünk után—Erdély-részi országos kuruckapitánya is lett*] (Ignác 12).

But the people of Torockó stick to their rights to the end, even after the mercenary Rabutin's punishment squad rushes in. Erzsébet Dani's book explores the wide and varied spectrum of post-Trianon identity management strategies that Ignác's novels display. The Torockó community, with their strong sense of collective identity, could represent the type with an "identity backbone of uncolonizable identity" [*identitásgerincű identitáskolonizálhatatlanság*] (2015b: 265).<sup>5</sup> The miners refuse to sign the *reverzális* ['official statement'] according to which "Torockó is not a royal free borough any more" [*Torockó nem szabad királyi város többé*], but "it and all its inhabitants will be bonded in perpetual serfdom to the Toroczkay family of Torockószentgyörgy" [*minden lakójával egyetemben a torockószentgyörgyi Toroczkay család*]

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<sup>5</sup> Erzsébet Dani's description of the character Máté in Ignác's *Született Moldovában* ['Born in Moldova'].

*örökös jobbágyi tulajdona*] (215-216). Nevertheless, they are compelled to start signing the statement after the general has had the two young men of grit, Andris Ekkárt and Gergely Szabó, hanged, and after sixteen-year old Katalin—who is also the narrator of the novel,<sup>6</sup> the Reverend Áron Kriza's "astute" [*eszes*] and "strong-willed" [*nagyakaratú*] (17) daughter—rushes up into the church tower with a flaming torch in hand, sets the roof on fire, and falls from the tower as she wants to throw the torch on the executioner. All in all—F. Komáromi summarizes the novel deftly—*Torockói gyász* is the "tragic history" [*tragikus históriája*] of how Torockó responded to the "tragic challenge of fate" [*a sors tragikus kihívásaira*] (2009: 354). But, as we have seen, the "tragic challenge of fate" that Torockó's people were confronted with followed from specific historical circumstances and came in a specific historical period (1702 was one year before Rákóczi's war of independence broke out in 1703). Moreover, the social-political drama is rooted in even earlier centuries. The Torockók had been scheming to disprivilege the people of Torockó ever since the royal patent in question had been issued by thirteenth-century Hungarian king Béla IV. But where and how does the theme of identity manifest itself in the novel, and what are the relevant messages reaching across and far beyond the borders of the story's own Transylvanian eighteenth century time and space?

The concept of "across and far beyond" was already introduced in my former study but in a different context, that of narratorial cognition (2015: 247). Let me add an Ignác sentence to what I said there: the Torockó miners' revolution "has given the author of these lines no respite for a decade" [*egy évtizede nem hagyja nyugodni e sorok íróját*] (12). The significance of this sentence in the Preface in the formation of the referential world of the novel will be realized if we ask: for a decade in relation to what? Ignác does not necessarily mean the ten years that passed since the time she came across the Torockó story in Balázs Orbán's *Székelyföld*. She talks about miners' *revolution*, one which had a tragic outcome, but if we consider that she wrote the book after the crushed revolution of 1956, the sentence may have been intended to suggest the year 1945, as well as establishing a link between the two "revolutions." Thus, the significant temporal indicator "for a decade" may refer to the period between 1946 and 1956. Moreover, if we go back ten years from the year of the novel's publication, 1958, it lands us in 1948. This makes the referential expansion of time from 1702 to 1956 much richer in meaning as 1948 was "the year of volte-face" as the communists liked to call it, when communist dictatorship established itself with full force. It then becomes clear that the twentieth-century author Ignác undoubtedly designed the eighteenth-century story to be about her own turbulent age as well.

If we can convincingly argue that what triggered the miners' revolution was the tyrannical behavior of the Torockók, supported by foreign military force headed by General Rabutin, which also targeted the Torockó (and Transylvanian) sense of cultural and national identity, the miners' revolution can clearly be viewed as a defensive war of identity too. It is important for Ignác that, relying on Balázs Orbán, the roots of the community's self-definition should be clear at the outset: the novel will be about the Székelys of Aranyosszék, who broke off "from the Székely cradle of the elbow-joint nook of the Southern Carpathians" [*a Déli-Kárpátok*

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<sup>6</sup> The main body of the novel (the storyworld of *Torockói gyász*) is Katalin's diary. The speaker of the Preface is the implied author. In the hundred pages that follow Katalin Kriza's death and thus the closure of her confessions (Rabutin's letters and the postfaces) omniscient narration and the implied-author technique alternate.

*könyökhajlatában található székelbőlcsöböl*] (6). But uncovering the roots<sup>7</sup> does not in itself *thematize* identity, what does, however, is what Ignác added immediately to the foregoing passage: wherever they drifted by "their enterprising spirit and the necessity of survival" [*vállalkozó kedvük s a megélhetés kényszere*], "they took along their community customs, the feeling of belonging together, and the claim for their special rights" [*mindenüvé magukkal vitték közösségi szokásaikat, összetartozásuk érzését és sajátos jogaik igényét*] (6). And the sense of belonging together and the conventions of the community that are handed down from generation to generation in Torockó constitute the force and the system which make the formation of collective identity possible. Tradition, in Jan Assmann's apt definition, is "normative wisdom," "the knowledge that establishes and preserves identity" (2011: 123). Ignác combines the social-political conflict with the identity issue right here at the outset of her novel; or rather, she embeds the latter in the former. The Torockó demand for those specific privileges became a component of collective identity formation as the miners had been living in accord with what was incorporated in that royal patent. This was the source of their collective self-definition, or, as Assmann would have it, the source of their "'we' identity."<sup>8</sup>

The story of the futile Torockó war against abominable injustice is directed to flow, figuratively speaking, in the riverbed of national and collective identity all through the novel. Torockó collective identity turns out to be identical with national identity in which Székely, Saxon, and Romanian form an unbroken unity.<sup>9</sup> Gabriella F. Komáromi rightly regards *Torockói gyász* to be "the novel of a community" [*egy közösség regénye*] (2009: 350, note 15). As Ignác remarks in her preface, the mining town's "three nationalities have become one amalgamated community" [*háromféle nemzetiségből egy városközösséggé ötvöződött*] (15). They were ready to stand up to the Austrian-lackey Torockays and the emperor's general: "They would not work, would not eat, rather than do statute labour in the mine" [*Inkább nem dolgoznak, nem esznek, de robotban nem bányásznak*] (101). So it is not only justice that Torockó's people want to achieve, but they are also battling with the serious attack launched to humiliate their collective dignity, to scorn and flout their individual and collective identity. Their fight is nothing less than a determined protection of collective cohesion. They received a newcomer miner in the community only "on condition that he identified himself with their laws and customs" [*ha az törvényeiket és szokásaikat magáévá tette*] (15).

"Székely-German-Romanian Torockó people" [*székely-német-román torockóiak*] (8) became a community. But is there any indication in the novel that the collective consciousness of

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<sup>7</sup> That is, the Székelys of Aranyosszék originate from Székelyland.

<sup>8</sup> "The collective or 'we' identity is the image that a group has of itself and with which its members associate themselves. It therefore has no existence of its own, but comes into being through recognition by its participating individuals. It is as strong or as weak as its presence in the consciousness of its members and its motivating influence on their thoughts and actions" (2011: 113-114).

<sup>9</sup> Being severed from Hungary was a long way down the road for Transylvania at this point. Nor did it form part of recently liberated and reunited but also resubjugated Hungary (liberated from the Turks and resubjugated by Austria). Not until after the Rákóczi War of Independence had been defeated. At the time our story took place, Transylvania was still independent, although as a Habsburg province, ruled by an imperial governor-general, who governed it on behalf of the actual "prince," the Austrian emperor.

Transylvanian *Torockó* can be expanded to refer also to *whole Transylvania's* sense of identity? Ignác would need such an indication for the Trianon transmission of reference, in order to be able to conjure up the Trianon-trauma association. What we find in the book in this respect is that the small community's sense of identity does lead on to that of the large community. Moreover, the two become intertwined in a central, ancient identity symbol: the Torockó miners' flag. "The flag of our mine is blue and golden yellow" Katalin Kriza writes, "because these are the colors of the country of Transylvania" [*A mi bányásztlónk kék- és aranyárga színű, mert az Erdélyország színe is*] (62) with "We have one God!" [*Egy az Isten!*] (63) written on it. What is also loaded with, even confesses, Transylvanian consciousness, is *writing itself* in *Torockói gyász*. Not only its content but also the role that Katalin assigns to it: "I wrote this for ourselves, for our descendants" [*Magunknak írtam ezt, a mi utódainknak*] (263), to keep the memory of the heroes alive so that—as worded in the Balázs Orbán quote that closes Ignác's preface—the past should not be "*misrepresentable*" [*elferdített*] (20). The target at which this is primarily leveled is Ignác's own post-1945, past-distorting age. But let us stay with the Transylvanian relevance of the Torockó insistence on preserving identity. Here is the first sentence Katalin put down on paper as it appears in the novel:

And the horror of Torockó will spread around whole Transylvania; the crushed, rebellious miners will paint the sign crying for revenge not only on their own walls but also on the walls of estates, and from now on it will be called *Torockó mourning* (258. Italics in the original).

[*És elterjed a torockói rettenet az egész Erdélyben; az eltiport, lázongó bányászok felfestik nemcsak a saját, hanem az úri házak falára is a bosszúra hívó véres jelet, amit úgy hívnak ezentúl, hogy: torockói gyász*] (258.)

That is to say, the title symbol of "Torockó mourning"—the red circle painted around the windows on the white outside walls of Torockó houses as a reminder of the blood of the sacrificial lamb—is another central sign, a controlling image of the whole text. "[W]e will keep on renewing the sign . . . [u]ntil the day of revenge arrives!" Mrs. Szabó and Mrs. Göndöl say [*megújítjuk a jelet mindaddig ... [m]íg a bosszú napja el nem érkezik!*] (250-251). The role that Katalin means for writing (and Ignác means for the novel) is here placed in the larger context of Transylvanian identity. Torockó's freedom-loving people are fighting a war of independence after all, in part, to retain their freedom against those interal predatory squires who want to reduce them to perpetual serfdom, and partly against the foreign enemy, the Austrian allies of those landlords.

As can be seen, when viewed from the identity angle, the novel confirms the same referential transmission that I referred to in my former (cognitive narratological) paper (2015: 251): self-sacrificing Katalin Kriza's dramatic signal fire<sup>10</sup> sheds interpretive light on much later historical traumas, beyond borders of time and space. The lime brush of the eighteenth-century

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<sup>10</sup> The church tower on fire, but, metaphorically speaking, the novel itself, written by Katalin as her diary, with the intention to understand what happened are themselves signal fires.

reverend's daughter does paint the red circle ("Torockó mourning") up on the walls of Ignác's 1958 (i.e., post-1956) Hungary, and on the walls of post-Trianon Székely—Hungarian misery of fate. The 1956 Hungarian anticommunist revolution and anti-Soviet war of independence was put down with a ruthless violence, a crying injustice, just as Rabutin's deed had been in Torockó in November 1702. Katalin was shouting the appropriate words at Rabutin as she rushed up the church tower with the burning torch in her hand: "killer, butcher, killer, butcher" [*gyilkos, hóhér, gyilkos, hóhér*] (238). Udvarhely is too far away, István Torockay and his soldiers cannot see the Torockó signal light, so they cannot rally to Torockó's support. But the light of the church tower that Katalin set on fire travels far greater distances in both time and space than the distance between contemporary Torockó and Udvarhely was.

I did not want this essay to be the proverbial case when one cannot not see the forest for the trees. Therefore, instead of going into *details* about how the theme of identity manifests itself in the novel, first I wished to trace the *main lines* of the way it is handled by Ignác: to display the satiric strategy of linked referential transmissions in time and place (1702, 1921, 1945 and/or 1948, 1956). Not that this method would have exhausted what *Torockói gyász* can tell us regarding the subject of identity; that we would have barely enough identity momenta to enable us to draw those main lines. Far from it: the the richness in identity-related details is surprising, provided that the reader remains capable of paying consistent attention to the identity component amidst the sweeping drama of the storyworld. Actually, real subsystems can be discovered beneath the main lines of ironic correspondences between the linked periods of history in the book. Each and every subsystem is (collective) identity-based or is expendable in the dimension of (collective) identity.

By way of illustration let us return to the historical orbit of national-identity protection—the contextual ball off which one of the main threads of the identity aspect of the drama is unwound. The countless manifestations of this belongs with what, as mentioned above, Assmann calls the normative and formative wisdom which substantiates identity. Simply put: tradition as collective identity. The people welded into a strong mining community join in voluntary cooperative work to help those who need help even in farm work. Also, "the oldest gates...have old runic writing" [*a legöregebb kapukon...régi rovásírás*] (67). Special occasions "are regulated by old Torockó tradition" [*régi torockói szokás szerint zajlik*] (144), about which Katalin goes into elaborate details. Similarly, tradition dictates how people dress, but such particulars do not simply occur in the novel as *couleur locale*; they are expressive of Torockó identity and are channeled into the drama. A good case in point of how costume/dress is used to indicate identity is the depiction of Mihály Toroczky wearing *labanc* [pro-Austrian] German trousers, "licking Austrian boots" [*az osztrákok talpát nyaldosó*] (75), contrasted with his *kuruc* [pro-Hungarian] brother, István, "the gallant captain of Aranyosszék" [*az aranyosszéki székeknek vitézlő kapitánya*] (75) in his hussar's pelisse and braided pants (54, 76). Such (sartorial) details are not peripheral, quite the contrary, they point to the denseness of the war, as they serve to illustrate how Lady Krisztina and Mihály Toroczky make every effort to denigrate and prohibit Torockó customs and traditions and thereby attempt to make Torockó people submit by depriving them of their sense of identity. At the same time, they aggressively assert their own traditional privileges, such as the ignominious *jus primae noctis* (the feudal lord's supposed right to have sexual

relations with his vassal's bride on the first night of their marriage) in the case of beautiful Borbála Székely (125), whom they basely ensnare and she is sent to the pillory by the misled community as a consequence.<sup>11</sup> And the Székely girls' "lovely hemp blouse with the embroidered bodice" [*hímzett vállú, szép kendering*] (24) was declared by the old Lady Krisztina to be "ungainly and impermissible" [*idétlennek mondotta és nem engedélyezte*] (24). When Torockó's people defiantly adhere to their customs and traditions, i.e., to their national identity (their national costume included), it is nothing less than *rebellion*, accepting the battle. These people are doing it quite consciously, themselves connecting the denigration of their traditions as well as the attack launched against their collective identity with the tribulations concerning the pilfered royal deed of gift. And the royal patent was not a myth invented in the novel, but was itself a documented historical justice bestowed by Béla IV and effectively stolen by the Toroczkays from its rightful owners. Although historically accurate, in the novel the royal patent does assume mythical dimensions through the role it fulfills in the life of the community and especially because of the fuss that had been going on about it for centuries. We can extend and apply Assmann's term and say that the royal patent becomes the "mythomotor" of Torockó's collective identity and thus of the events in the novel. As Assmann argues, mythomotorics provides "directional impetus," a solid ground for the past, and "the present now finds itself dislocated" as a result (80).

Perhaps the foregoing paragraph makes clear why the system of Torockó traditions is not a mere heap of negligible details, not simply *couleur locale*; rather, it is inextricably woven, with strong threads of identity, into the the miners' revolution. Those traditions establish the natural and necessary connection between national identity and revolution. And the relevance of that connection, in turn, becomes the message, which, through the historical logic indicated above, is transmitted beyond the borders of early eighteenth-century time and space, from 1702 all the way to 1956. It is enough to mark the words of wise old Father Boncza (former leader of the miners), who in the novel is the walking cultural memory of Torockó, and who "infused" [*beléjította*] (34) every generation with remembrance, by doing all in his power to ensure that the miners cherish their old customs. He summons sternly to the observation of their traditional Ironbread holiday (an ancient, annual big holiday to celebrate their mining privilege) [*mindent elkövetett, hogy a bányász nép a régi szokásokat ápolja s tartsa meg*] (37). Because, he argues, a paper can be altered, hidden, disputed. What one can rely on, as opposed to paper, is "what is retained in people's pure and honest memory forever and unalterably" [*ami az emberek tiszta, becsületes emlékezetében él mindörökké és megmásíthatatlanul*] (37). That is, Father Boncza shows that it is oral testimonial remembrance that is able to provide a more eloquent testimony than any document [*minden okiratnál ékebben bizonyít*] (37). It provides traditional identity and thus serves as a weapon against oppression. It is *tradition as identity* that becomes a weapon

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<sup>11</sup> Lady Krisztina wanted her grandson (Mihály's son) to use the privilege of *jus primae noctis* with this girl, but Borbála frustrated the attempt. As a revenge, Krisztina created the appearance that it did happen, thus duping the community into believing that Borbála was a "shameless girl" after all, who "deserved" pillory.



here. So "Father Boncza's knowledge is not called history, but testimonial remembrance" *Boncza Apó tudományát nem történelemnek, hanem bizonyágtévő emlékezésnek nevezik*] (34).<sup>12</sup>

As for developing a spirit of solidarity in war, *that* itself had become a tradition since the women of Torockó had made the Mongolians run with the repeated crackings of their mortars (45). Assmann devotes a whole subchapter to the subject of "Memory as Resistance." After all, tradition manifests itself, he contends, in "ceremonial communication," which, in turn, is "ritual coherence" itself (2011: 124). Torockó is written culture like Assmann's example (Egypt) is, but it is writing itself that becomes unreliable here. Group cohesion can be achieved only by returning to rites (see the Ironbread holidays). Rites, Assmann again, asserts, are "the infrastructure providing the canals or arteries along which the elements that form identity flow" (2011: 124).

The most bizarre because most unjust aspect of the tragedy of Torockó—yet something that logically follows from the group-interactions that form the nucleus of the drama—has to do with the community's insistence on customs, tradition, rites, costumes, and other ethnically marked components of identity formation. Those components both serve to help maintain collective identity for the people of Torockó and at the same time *stigmatize* them in the eyes of the outside world as being backward. Erving Goffman deals with the stigmatization of personal identity primarily, but is also aware of "the tribal stigma of race, nation, religion" (4). But there is no need for us to turn to Goffman to remember what has been corroborated by ample historical experience: that whole ethnic groups can be stigmatized by collective-identity features. Still, although Goffman discourses on social and not cultural or collective identity,<sup>13</sup> his theory of stigma furnishes us with a good toolbox of interpretation that can lead to a better understanding of cultural stigmatization in *Torockói gyász*. It is "virtual social identity" that stigmatizes "actual social identity" in the Ignác novel (for these theoretical notions see Goffman 1986: 2 ff). But the Torockó strategy of collective "tension management and information management" (Goffman 1986: 135), as opposed to that of the stigmatized individual, is *not* hiding the discrediting stigmatized characteristic<sup>14</sup> and *not* exercising "information control" (135-138) concerning the stigmatized feature. What we have here is *rejection* that turns *against* stigmatization. It is an attitude which proudly upholds the identity characteristics stigmatized from outside of the community. The miners' revolution is also a war of independence waged in defense of national identity, and the war rages, to a considerable extent, on the battlefield of

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<sup>12</sup> Father Boncza's Christian name is Moses, suggesting *law*. The intertextual plus of God's laws is there in his name even if he was a historical figure and was called by this very name.

<sup>13</sup> About how these relate to each other see also Abádi-Nagy 2011: 745-747.

<sup>14</sup> We do have a stigmatized *individual* in the novel too. It is our narrator, Katalin Kriza, who describes herself through her physical handicap: "My back was left leaning to the side, and my left shoulder-blade sticks out a little, pricking and lean, to this day" (23). However, she is not cast out by the community due to her handicap, which is instead a spiritual burden for her because she feels that it is a deviance and falls short of—let us put it this way, then—the expectations of virtual social identity. She would certainly opt for hiding her inborn defect by wearing traditional blouses, but a clergyman's daughter is not supposed to wear "the loose, embroidered blouse of the miners' daughters" [*a bányászlanýok bő, himzett ingét*] from which her shoulder-blade would not stick out (23).

cultural identity, with a series of battles for tradition protection inside of that. As in the case of "certain racial, religious, and ethnic groups" (Goffman 1986: 139), stigmatization aims at the social removal of the Torockó miners also. But to move Torockó's people out of the way (by depriving them of their rights) takes military aggression, and that results in the moral elevation of the community. Moral stature is attained by the wavering determination to preserve identity itself. Social psychologist Serge Moscovici would call this minority<sup>15</sup> "behavioral style," which is capable of making the majority unsure and confused (quoted in Sampson 1991: 152). This "behavioral style" by the Toroczko people did indeed make clever Lady Krisztina unsure and confused on how to deal with the serfs so that "this Satan's old hag" [*ez a Sátán öreganyja*] (255) has a change of heart<sup>16</sup> (even if we are not sure how sincere it is) and, drifting closer to her freedom-fighter younger son, István she says, "It cannot go on like this," perhaps, "that the oppressed should trample upon the doubly oppressed" [*nem lehet többé ez immár, hogy elnyomott tiporjon a kétszeresen elnyomotton*] (252).<sup>17</sup>

Another vital source of collective and national identity (besides traditions) for the people in *Torockói gyász* is unitarianism, a religion which preaches "a realistic, earthly worldview" [*reális földi világszemléletet*] (16), deepening community cohesion, and providing a firm base for Torockó cultural identity. It is precisely on the basis of the community's religion that Reverend Áron Kriza, Katalin's father, appeals to the *Diploma Leopoldinum*,<sup>18</sup>—arguing that it "grants and protects our freedom of worship" [*biztosítja és védelmezi szabad vallásgyakorlatunkat*] (212) and hence charging Rabutin with sacrilege, but his attempts were all in vain. General Rabutin's soldiers did push into the church, and "His Majesty's plenipotentiary" [*őfelsége plenipotenciális képviselője*] (215) does declare the church to be "the scene of court-martial" [*a katonai bíróság színhelyének*] (214) with no hesitation. It is of far-reaching significance that the revolution and the identity drama of the novel reach their climactic point around and inside a church. It is here that the final confrontation takes place, and is concluded with murders, with the church tower shot to ruins, and the *reverzális* (the document that reversed Torockó's fate from freedom to serfdom) is signed under crushing pressure. It is no problem for Rabutin to subject a free city to servitude; to take away the royal privilege that had been granted to a free people; to quell desire for freedom with bloodshed; to humiliate cultural/collective/national identity deeply. He can do that as those rapacious landlords and their Austrian supporters are fully aware of what Erzsébet Dani expressed in the following words, apropos of another Ignác-novel *Született Moldovában* ['Born in Moldova'] (1940). "One of the pillars of national identity is religion; he who is 'in

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<sup>15</sup> While the Torockó miners represent the majority as opposed to a handful of the Torczkays in an everyday sense, the fact of the matter is that through Lady Krisztina and Mihály Toroczky they have to face the governing power machine and the military force of the Austrian empire. In the 1921 referential transmission context it is the oppression of the Hungarian minority that their story exemplifies.

<sup>16</sup> She becomes repositioned, as cognitive narratology would put it.

<sup>17</sup> That is, the oppressor landowner trampling upon the miners is himself oppressed by the Austrian invaders, thus the miners are doubly oppressed: both by the landlord and the Austrian invading army.

<sup>18</sup> Emperor Leopold's charter for Transylvania in 1691. It granted freedom of religion and confirmed all deeds of gift and royal patents from former kings and princes.

possession' of religion, can exert an influence on, and shape national and cultural identity [*A nemzeti öntudat egyik alapeleme a vallás: aki 'birtokolja' a vallást, az befolyásolni és alakítani tudja a nemzeti és kulturális öntudatot*] (2015a: 77). Everything that happens to Reverend Áron Kriza in *Torockói gyász* is also part of a campaign launched against religious—and thereby cultural, collective, national—identity. The first item of information we read in the book about the reverend is that he is released from the prison of Gyalu after a month's torture (23). After Rabutin's military intervention many followers of the faith disappear without a trace (27). To devastate Hungarian religious and cultural consciousness (national identity) in Transylvania by the persecution of the clergy was and has been the power game of the Romanian majority against the Hungarian minority after and ever since Trianon. The same strategy was used as a political weapon also by the post-1945 communist regime in the mother country. As for the post-Trianon situation, the balance is openly drawn up by Ignác herself in the preface (similarly to Katalin Kriza, Ignác was also a clergyman's daughter).

To find out about how close the relationship between a community and its ministers could be in historic times, it is not necessary for the writer of these lines to search for Transylvanian documents. It is enough to recall her own childhood and view the fate of the village and the community through the eyes of the intelligentsia with whom it was a heritage running in the blood that they were "servants to the community" (16).

*[Hogy történelmi időkben egy közösség milyen benső viszonyban tudott élni papjaival, ehhez a sorok írójának szükségtelen régi erdélyi dokumentumokat felkutatnia, elég, ha a saját gyermekkorára emlékszik vissza és a falunak, a közösségnek sorsát annak az értelmiségnek szemével nézi, melynek vérébe itatódott öröksége volt, hogy ő a "közösség szolgálója".]*

Concerning post-1945 Hungary, older Hungarian readers of this essay still remember what the Rákosi takeover meant, the change that the so-called year of turn (1948) resulted in. A single idea from Mátyás Rákosi's speech of January 10, 1948 will do to evoke the spirit of what the essence is for us in our present context: in that very year "young Hungarian democracy" [*a fiatal demokrácia*] "will also do away with the reactionary force that hides behind the robes of the church (*Approving, enthusiastic, big applause*)" [*végezni fog azzal a reakcióval is, mely az egyház köntöse mögé búvik (Helyeslő, lelkes nagy taps)*] (<http://mek.oszk.hu/04400/04493/04493.htm#28>).

Several more touches complete the picture of 1702 Torockó collective identity as well as the ways in which individual and collective identity relate in the novel. One such detail is the self-disparaging moral identity of the community, a moral strait-lacedness which involuntarily plays into the hands of scheming Lady Krisztina (146-147). Another example can be described as concealed emotional identity, a confusing circumstance hidden in narrator Katalin's heart (she is herself secretly in love with Borbála's Andris Ekkárt; 165, 201-202). The series could be continued with disturbed identifications as well as identity-positionings and repositionings (for example, the tragic ups and downs of the Borbála/Andris love relationship as regulated/poisoned by rigid conventional attitudes; 166-167, 199). Detailed inquiry into these would land us on the interpersonal terrain of Torockó's collective consciousness and would show the positions and

positioning of the individual in what Fritz Heider would call the "complex causal network" and "cognitive matrix" of the Torockó fight for justice and cultural identity (Heider 2003: 416, 418). Contradicting versions of how reality is conceived could also be studied in intermental dispersion (several characters are different when viewed from the perspective of others than from their own). For example, we could discuss Katalin as she tries to imagine the notion others form about her (95). We could also discourse on how her narratorial cognitive competence is limited by her young age ("A foolish child, that's what I was" [*Oktalan gyermek voltam én*]) (118), as well as on its consequence that can be termed "narratorial deadlock" or "narratorial blind spot": the exceptionally intelligent, precocious child reaches the point when she finds events inscrutable and feels she is a "know-nothing" narrator (110-111). It would be a challenge to explore "the relation of personal identity to public history" in our narrator (Strauss 1997: 171); how she interprets, memorizes, selects, and reconstructs what happens. A theoretical investigation of how identity and cognition/cognitivity relate in the novel would also be appropriate. However, these and other related subjects would sidetrack the present discussion.

It is hoped that the present study managed to answer the questions it posed at the outset: where is the theme of identity in Torockó's social tragedy of fighting and losing a war waged for justice, and what is its relevance that points beyond the borders of Katalin Kriza's time and space? By way of closing and for further confirmation, let us take notice of a circumstance which can easily escape the reader's attention, as the problematic of identity does in this exciting historical novel, unless one is bent on pursuing the theme of identity very closely: tradition as a major factor constituting identity is coupled with the cause of protecting those contested rights very early in the novel. Father Boncza's reminder on Ironbread-distribution day is: "Whether we have produce or we don't, whether the squire can take it or not, the *custom* of distribution and the holiday must be observed because it is *the proof of our rights*" [*Ha van termés, ha nincs, ha elviheti az uraság, ha nem, az osztzkodás szokását s az ünnepséget tartsuk meg, mert az a mi jogunknak a bizonyága*"] (38, italics added). This is about ceremonial tradition that lends form to the life of the miners. In Assmann's terms again: tradition is "knowledge that establishes and preserves identity"; we are talking about customs and ceremonies that keep alive the system that makes up collective consciousness, "constituting and reproducing the identity of the group" (2011: 123-124). Assmann in his *Cultural Memory* writes about "the memory culture of the Judeo-Christian world" (2011: 194), apropos of the book of Deuteronomy: "... if this account was not to be lost, it had to be transformed from biographical to cultural memory. The means used were collective mnemotechnics..." (2011: 196). Ultimately, as the novel's narrator, Katalin Kriza's purpose with committing the events to paper is exactly this: to transform biographical experience to collective memory. Assmann's collective mnemotechnics are all there in the novel: "awareness," "education," and "passing on" (the novel as a whole with Father Boncza's traditionalism and exhortations as well as the function these techniques fulfill in collective indoctrination; on the latter see Abádi Nagy 2011: 749); "visibility" or "limitic symbolization" (the sign of Torockó mourning); and "festivals of collective remembrance" (Ironbread day). "[O]ral tradition: poetry as a codification of historical memory" also has an important role to play (for the foregoing categories of mnemotechnics see Assmann 2011: 196-199.) The novel also contains poetry, which further serves as a codification of historical memory, as, for example, in Gligor's song (mentally challenged Gligor starts singing the song with no reason but high relevance once when the miners confer with each other about what to do):

Multiplying outlaws.  
Pending judgement is now close,  
Condemned are then all their lords (180).

[*A betyárok szaporodnak.  
Ítélet tételre várnak,  
Urak ellen határoznak.*]

Add to that the unpublished song of Gergely Kriza, Katalin's brother:<sup>19</sup>

You can't wait forever  
For better days to come (337).

[*Nem lehet örökké  
Jobb napokra várni.*]

The ballad of Borbála Székely, sung softly by Mrs. Göndöl to herself on the closing page of the novel plays the same role:

The towering pine tree's  
boughs, loped off for gallows.  
And they hanged upon it  
Those two handsome fellows (368).

[*Sudár fenyőfának  
Ágait levágták.  
Azt a két szép legényt  
Arra akasztották.*]

Most importantly, Father Boncza, who is the guardian of both Torockó customs and Torockó's cultural memory, combines the two (customs and memory) in his Ironbread-day song and, when the novel has just opened, strikes the note about the necessity of making remembering the most important custom as it is the preserver of truth, which is most relevant from the point of view of my argument here.

Let us make remembrance our eternal custom,  
Let it be in this place what truth will be locked in (44).

[*Tegyünk emlékezést örökös szokásba,  
Mi légyen e helyütt az nép igazsága!*]

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<sup>19</sup> Áron Kriza's son, Katalin's brother escaped and later distinguished himself as captain in Rákóczi's war of independence.

Katalin Kriza is determined to write the story "well-assembled" [*jól egybegondolva*] as she makes it clear on page two of the book (24). She has succeeded admirably, and, as we have seen, she accomplished her task impressively from the point of view of handling cultural memory, too, and bringing collective mnemotechnics into motion most skillfully, generating meanings that bridge historic tragedies of two centuries.

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