

"I had to have Bartók break through the front of Hungarian indifference" (pp. 60–61). Such claims were characteristic of Balázs's patronizing attitude towards greater talents. Zsuffa is too honest a scholar to deny that when *The Wooden Prince* and *Bluebeard's Castle* had their first performances, the Hungarian critics praised Bartók's music and flayed Balázs's libretto. What the biographer could have added is that time has not changed the verdict: today Balázs the writer is remembered mainly as the author of those two libretti.

Whenever Joseph Zsuffa steps beyond the field of film, he tends to lose perspective. He does not deny that in 1917 "Balázs favored German culture and hoped for its victory in the war" (p. 53). What he fails to mention is that the "animosity" of the major poet Mihály Babits (1883–1941) toward Balázs was the result of three factors: as were all the members of the circle of *Nyugat*, the most important Hungarian journal of the period, Babits was sharply critical of the war, wanted to see French as more influential than German culture in his country, and considered Balázs a minor poet.

Because of his almost unqualified admiration for his hero, the biographer is tempted to misinterpret not only the literary but also the historical context in which the career of Balázs has to be examined. To make the point that Balázs's father, a high-school teacher, was punished severely for his anti-clerical views, Zsuffa calls Lőcse, the place to which he was transferred, "an insignificant town" in which "during seven hundred years there was little change" (pp. 4–7). This is a gross simplification. Although by the 1890s Lőcse was in decline, it had been one of the centers of the rising bourgeoisie since the Middle Ages, and the strong cultural traditions of its largely German population must have been advantageous to an intellectual whose task was to teach Goethe in the original.

The portrait of an artist cannot be complete without an analysis of the circumstances under which he lived and worked. The time spent in the German-speaking community of Lőcse must have contributed to bilingualism, just as his spiritual education was largely the result of his membership of the "Sunday Circle", a group which played a major role in the preparation of the first Hungarian Commune (21 March–1 August 1919). (Cf. Mary Gluck, *Georg Lukács and His Generation 1900–1918*, Cambridge, MA 1985.) Unfortunately, this biography does not offer a satisfactory analysis of the activities of this intellectual movement. On the one hand, Zsuffa fails to mention two important members of the Sunday Circle, the writer Emma Ritoók, who turned against the Commune, and the art historian Lajos Fülep, who was the editor of the only periodical of the group. On the other hand, the biographer makes the sweeping generalization that "the Hungarians felt that they had been abandoned by the West and betrayed by Wilson, so they turned to the East and Lenin for deliverance" (p. 78). In view of the fact that the Party of the Communists of Hungary was founded in Moscow and the short-lived Commune led by Béla Kun and others (Béla Balázs and György Lukács among them) was extremely undemocratic and unpopular, this assumption is misleading. In any case, it cannot help us understand the reasons why Balázs spent the years 1919–1945 outside Hungary.

Joseph Zsuffa's biography succeeds in pointing out that Béla Balázs has a place in the history of film criticism. What it fails to emphasize is that he was a second-rate writer who served the dictatorships of Kun, Stalin, and Rákosi.

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SAMUEL R. WILLIAMSON, JR.

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY AND THE ORIGINS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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The Habsburg contribution to the origins of the First World War is usually presented as a tale of two cheques. The first cheque is the blank one, given by the Kaiser and his Chancellor on 5–6 July, which guaranteed German support for Habsburg action against Serbia. The second is the 'lost cheque': Pasic's alleged

warning to Vienna that an assassination attempt on the heir-apparent was imminent. Supposedly, the message was sent not to the Ministry of Finance, which had responsibility for Bosnian affairs, but instead to the Ministry of the Interior, the institution which any well meaning foreigner might have thought discharged responsibility for matters of internal security. Having been misdirected, the warning was lost in the post.

The second of these cheques is a pure *canard*, of uncertain provenance, and it is thankfully not mentioned in the work under review. Nevertheless, both the lost cheque and the blank cheque have been frequently used to characterise the Monarchy on the eve of the First World War. The Monarchy is thus depicted as an anachronistic and moribund structure, held together by the type of bureaucracy which muddles its ministries and loses important correspondence. So great was its enfeeblement that the Monarchy was only prepared to go to war once it was sure of German support. Without the backing of its aggressive ally, so it is presumed, the 'senile empire' (as Barbara Tuchman described it) would not have had the courage for a fight.

Samuel Williamson entirely rejects this type of account. Instead, he apportions a good part of the blame for the First World War to Austria and fastens responsibility for the conflict on the Emperor's diplomats and generals. Despite the extensive perusal of unpublished material and twenty years of research, the author has not come across much new information. After all, plenty of scholars have been there before him, not least Luigi Albertini. Nevertheless, Williamson's interpretation is refreshing and runs contrary to some of the prevailing orthodoxies of today. As a consequence, instead of the Kaiser and Von Moltke, we have now a new set of villains: the Chief of the General Staff, Conrad von Hötendorf, and the Governor General of Bosnia, Oskar Potiorek. And instead of railway timetables and the junction at Aachen, we have Plans B and R and the critical deployment of Echelon B.

The author begins by emphasising the strengths of the Monarchy: "bustling with intellectual and artistic activity, the monarchy enjoyed a robust economy and a steadily improving standard of living. In the years after 1900 crisis after crisis tested its political institutions, yet state services continued to expand, the quality of education advanced and a measure of political pragmatism prevailed" (pp. 5-6). In support of his contention that nobody in the Monarchy actually wanted it overthrown, Williamson quotes Palacky 1848. Nevertheless, his point is more or less valid for the later period. In addition, Williamson maintains, the Monarchy had recently achieved some notable foreign policy triumphs and had successfully stood up to international protests over the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In 1908-09 the Monarchy showed itself to be both decisive and independent in its policy-making; ministers and generals accordingly believed that a tough and determined stance yielded results.

The outcome of the Balkan Wars called into question many of the presuppositions on which Habsburg foreign policy rested. Turkey fell an easy victim to the League; Russian support for Serbia was incautious and overt; and Serbia itself was not only doubled in size but perilously close to gaining an outlet to the Adriatic. While Bulgaria had been wooed away from St Petersburg, relations with Romania had deteriorated, thus jeopardising the secret treaty of 1883. The new Albanian state, which had been created partly at Berchtold's instigation to block Serbia, was also soon attracting Italian interest. The Matscheko memorandum drafted on the eve of Sarajevo, revealed the disappointment and misgivings of the Ballhausplatz at the turn of events in south-eastern Europe. But it took the murder of Franz Ferdinand to convince the diplomats of the necessity for a military solution.

Williamson argues that Vienna was quite ready on its own account to go to war against Serbia and needed no encouragement from Berlin. Serbian complicity in the murders was regarded as proven and the governor-general in Bosnia was busy exaggerating the threat to security posed there by Serbian intrigues. However, Berchtold anticipated fighting a local war and obtaining "a final and fundamental reckoning with Belgrade". He regarded the promises of German assistance only as a way of frightening Russia into a position of neutrality. It was Conrad who by precipitously shifting the Second Army (Echelon B) from the Balkan theatre to Galicia, transformed what could have been the Third Balkan War into what became instead the First World War. Although Williamson does not mention this, by moving Echelon B northwards, Conrad also ensured that Austria could not fulfil the "Halt in Belgrade" plan proposed by the Kaiser on 28 July. For the Fifth and Sixth armies left in the Balkan theatre were positioned on the Bosnian frontier and so were beyond easy striking range of the Serbian capital.

To begin with, Williamson comes out against all attempts to make Habsburg foreign policy an adjunct of

domestic. He argues that every issue had an *Aussen* and *Innen* component as far as the Monarchy was concerned. Hungarian measures against the Romanian population in Transylvania, for instance, would typically elicit protests from Bucharest (or even worse, a fact-finding mission by a Russian Foreign Minister) thus transforming a domestic issue into an international one. Likewise, Russian support for the Pan-Slav cause obviously carried implications for the internal affairs of the Monarchy. Given the overlap between *Innen* and *Aussen*, there can thus be no question of a "primacy of domestic politics" (p. 10).

Unfortunately, having made this important point, Williamson goes on to argue that the decision to go war was determined almost exclusively by foreign policy considerations and by a desire "to settle accounts with Serbia". In fact, study of the July crisis amply reveals the extent to which internal affairs influenced the decision to go to war. Both Sturgkh and Bilinski therefore believed that the security of the annexed provinces was dependent upon the defeat of Serbia, while Tisza was convinced by Burián that the South Slav problem could easily spill over into Transylvania. In his anxiety to demonstrate that Austrian policy-making was different to German, Williamson loses sight of the valuable starting-point of his discussion. In place of the primacy of domestic politics, he argues for the primacy of foreign politics and so does not tease out the continuing close relationship between the two.

Given the new interest in public opinion on the eve of the war, it is to be regretted that Williamson confines his account to high politics. As Clausewitz pointed out, wars are shaped by a trinity of groups: the politicians for whom it is an instrument of policy; the generals for whom it is an exercise in skill, and the people as a whole, whose involvement determines the level of the war's intensity. In August 1914, the call to arms was greeted with enthusiasm across the Monarchy. Given his own background and upbringing, one expects little Dollfuss to stand on tip toe in the recruiting sergeant's office; but Hofmannsthal, Musil, Kokoschka and Wittgenstein also hastened to the front. It is their surprising readiness to participate in the war which best indicates the degree of strength and popular vitality which the old Monarchy still retained.

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ROMANTIC IRONY

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As René Wellek wrote of Friedrich Schlegel: "Irony is his recognition of the fact that the world in its essence is paradoxical and that an ambivalent attitude alone can grasp its contradictory totality. For Schlegel irony is the struggle between the absolute and the relative, the simultaneous consciousness of the impossibility and the necessity of a complete account of reality" (*A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950*. Vol 2, *The Romantic Age*, New Haven: Yale UP, 1955). This present volume seeks to trace the new understandings of irony, most strikingly formulated by Schlegel and his contemporaries, that characterized the Romantic movement across Europe as it was expressed in literary and critical works.

Romantic Irony is the first in the five-volume subseries on Romanticism within the multi-volumed *Comparative History of European Literature* sponsored by the International Comparative Literature Association, of which the first volume, *Expressionism*, edited by Ulrich Weisstein, appeared in 1973. It is also the last vol-