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László Németh's *Revulsion*: Violence and Freedom
ZSUZSANNA OZSVATH

Literature and Politics in Germany of the 1830s: Karl Beck's Role in the *Junges Deutschland* Movement AGNES H. VARDY

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László Németh's *Revulsion*: Violence and Freedom

Zsuzsanna Ozsvath

The portrait of woman as victim of her own emotional and sexual nature lies within a well-known tradition that permeates Eastern and Western European literature, cutting across the boundaries of religion, ideology, and time. However, the contemporary Hungarian novel *Iszony* (*Revulsion*), written by László Németh between 1942 and 1947, manifests a fundamentally different approach which expands this traditional image.[1] Delineating the heroine with new and startling dimensions, *Revulsion* not only offers an unconventional feminine portrait, but also addresses major social and ethical issues, revealing the necessity of restructuring human relationships in general. It calls attention to the conflicts between individual need and social claim, and establishes parallels between the role of the wife in marriage and the role of the individual in society, suggesting that personal self-determination is the most basic human need and right, and, therefore, the most justified human demand. Indeed, in addition to furnishing an innovative vision of woman, *Revulsion* expounds a radical concept of human freedom.

Conventional in plot and structure, the novel is deceptive in its simplicity. Its form, first person narration, renders Nelli Kárász, her psychological structure and private feelings, central. Different from most young people of the village, she grows up to be a loner, shunning close relationships, avoiding social gatherings, dances, and parties. She has no emotional ties to anyone but her father. Together they share a life of loneliness, hard work, and poverty, a bleak present and a hopeless future.

As soon as she encounters her future husband and adversary, Sanyi Takaró, she fears and abhors him. But her parents disregard her feelings and pressure her beyond endurance: they see in Sanyi someone who will rescue Nelli from poverty, offer her long-absent security, and hence provide her with a good life. At first she defends herself against the pressure, but soon she loses ground; the death of her father, the illness of

her mother, and the encroaching force of Sanyi's pursuit break her will. She surrenders, and they marry: however, Nelli's revulsion to Sanyi prevails. The marriage deteriorates, and bitter hatred dominates her life. She becomes overwhelmed by fury and aggression. Her subsequent animosity grows to such an extent and generates such energy that it culminates in her murdering him.

This work provoked intense controversy among the critics in the Hungary of the late forties. Evaluating the novel from the Marxist point of view, official Hungarian criticism rejected the book because of its focus on the "private, psycho-sexual sphere." As early as 1946, I. Király said: "Németh's heroes are not the victims of objective circumstances, but of their own mistakes; their lot is not typical, but private and individual; they are damned to become lonely and isolated."[2] And György Lukács labeled Németh's individualistic approach not only as "dangerously" pessimistic, but even as "reactionary." As he claimed:

> The radical emphasis on the *inner region* is not coincidental: as a matter of fact, it is a conscious artistic approach as well as a demonstration of the author's moral outlook [italics added]. The type of person *Revulsion* advocates is someone who silently carries out his chores, who bears disappointments even catastrophes without wincing, who perceives self-fulfillment solely in his pedantically-accurate every day work (e.g. the father or the mother-in-law of the heroine). What is then the underlying suggestion of this novel, as László Németh's first significant novel since the liberation of Hungary? A new type of silence. . . . This is, . . . the novel expounds nothing less than a silent objection against the new democracy.[3]

In spite of the dominant critical opinion, a few critics of the time defended *Revulsion* against these attacks on the grounds that the novel *does* manifest social concerns. Contradicting official Hungarian criticism, István Sőtér, for example, said that underneath Németh's representation of psychological problems, themes reflecting class struggle emerge. "Not only does Diane's body break in this novel under the grip of Actaeen," he argued, "but the class of noblemen drowns in the hungry and violent arms of the peasants. And the deepest vibrations of these screams of horror have their roots in prevalent social conflicts; in fact, it would be a mistake not to hear them under the private overtones."[4] Likewise, János Czibor and Imre Sarkadi saw social criticism as an integral part of the novel.[5] In recent years, however, *Revulsion* has become less and less the center of controversial ideological encounters in Hungary; today, it is neither intensely attacked nor intensely defended from the Marxist point of view.[6] Free from doctrinal constraints, the author himself uses personal aesthetic criteria to explain that the work

explores feminine psychological dilemmas and offers a new vision of humanity's sexual and spiritual realm.[7]

Outside of Hungary, critical opinion diverges sharply regarding this novel and Németh's works in general. Whereas Lothar Sträter sees the author not only as a moralist and a social critic of the first rank, but also as an outstanding European novelist, many English and American reviewers consider Németh to be a traditional writer and perceive *Revulsion* as an old-fashioned Hungarian curiosity rather than a book of universal significance.[8] Károly Kerényi, on the other hand, regards Németh's style and characterization, even the gloomy and bleak atmosphere of his novels, as having supreme literary value. "Such novels," he writes in his essay on *Revulsion,* "pessimistic as they are, refute real pessimism through their sublime standards."[9] In fact, Kerényi believes Németh to be one of the greatest writers of European literature. As he says: "His [Németh's] women put him on a par with the creators of Electra, Anna Karenina, and Nora."[10]

Whereas the Marxist outlook clearly fails to elucidate the central issues of *Revulsion,* a psychological interpretation, common in Western criticism, initially suggests itself as a more relevant approach. Indeed, Nelli seems to be motivated solely by a pathologically passionate revulsion to Sanyi. As she says: "Do you know what 'love' is, Aunt Szeréna? It's nothing but the vulgar man's desire to cover his wife with his wetness before he devours her. And that is murderous. It left me without a single healthy thought" (II, 154).

However, in spite of the attention put on her feminine psychological nature, a close reading of the text reveals intricate layers of perspectives with ascending orders of concern: a national focus, a broader and more universal point of view, and finally Németh's own metaphysical perception. Indeed, Nelli only superficially resembles the conventionally drawn, emotionally-torn woman: when seen in a broader context, she illustrates a diversity of social and moral conflicts such as the relation between the individual and society, between isolation and community, between freedom and oppression. By dealing with Nelli's frustrated needs, Németh exposes both the frustration of Hungarian peasants and that of the individual in society; by pointing to her isolation, he discloses the isolation of the Hungarian village and stresses the moral and spiritual superiority of suffering. By insisting on Nelli's right to self-determination, Németh not only affirms the necessity for alternative patterns of life but advocates an extreme vision of human freedom, which justifies even violence, if necessary, for its realization.

In order to explore the underlying themes of the book, we must

examine Nelli and the characters surrounding her on all the levels previously mentioned. First of all, in spite of her authenticity as a particular character, Nelli reflects the expectations, patterns of life, and the socio-economic condition of her milieu as well. Therefore, in order to understand her reactions, we have to start our investigation by projecting her figure against the background of Hungarian village life between the two World Wars. Living in unendurable poverty and every day waging a hopeless struggle for life, the majority of Hungarian peasants hardly had any option to improve their lot.[11] Hence, the fact that Nelli does not attempt to better her life nor even become independent, and that she marries Sanyi and remains married to him against her will, is more significantly tied to the economic conditions of the time and the feudal, oppressive social structure of the country than to her emotional problems or to her feminine passivity. Without marriage, she has no realistic chance for survival. That is to say, rather than being a victim of her sexual determination, Nelli is a victim of the poverty and the slowly changing economic and social processes prevalent in the Hungary of her time. In fact, none of *Revulsion*'s characters seems to be able to rise above the general level of poverty and degradation. None but Sanyi hopes or plans for a better future, nor even tries to mend his life. Each of them accepts the hardship and the hopelessness of his condition. And even Sanyi's optimism is based on nothing but empty hopes: his endeavors are pointless in the long run; he moves in circles and fails in the end on every count. As Nelli describes his frame of mind:

> Instead of working on the farm, he thought of nothing but making deals. Although our cellar was empty, some days his breath smelt of wine. He spent his time with Uncle Kertész and other relatives, explaining the word-economy to them and drinking their wine. (II, 198)

Indeed, lethargy and weariness permeate the atmosphere of the village, restricting ambitions and lowering the expectations of people. Thus, to conceive of Nelli's dependence on men as a manifestation of her emotional instability, or as a traditionally feminine feature present in a male-oriented society, obscures the inherent social criticism of the book and ignores the reality of the conditions.

The characters of *Revulsion* should also be viewed against the background of the Hungarian populist literary tradition.[12] Focusing on the "Hungarian heritage" and the "Hungarian plight," this tradition highlights the isolation and hardship of the oppressed peasantry, and demands social and political reform. Peasants are often represented in the works of the populist writers as lonely and desperate individuals who either resign themselves to their fate or become single-handed rebels,

driven by their destitute circumstances and violent nature to the extreme edges of human tolerance.[13] Sharing the scope and vision of the movement, Németh recreates these characteristics not only in Nelli, but in her father, Sanyi's mother, and Aunt Szeréna, pointing to their common nature as well as to their common background and roots. Each of these four figures is portrayed as a silent and lonely person, suffering under overwhelming physical and existential deprivation. (There is, however, a difference in their reactions to extreme pressures: whereas Aunt Szeréna, Mrs. Takaró, and Mr. Kárász turn their despair inward, dying at the end in sudden heart-attacks, Nelli acts upon her feelings and becomes a murderess.) Németh does not use descriptions nor does he accumulate psychological arguments to explain his characters' most salient features, their need for separation and inner independence. Rather, he lovingly and sympathetically depicts these traits as parts of the figures' immutable essences. Yet, in spite of the similarities between this presentation and those of the populist writers, neither the characters depicted nor the issues raised in *Revulsion* simply follow the orbit of national views and traditions. Quite to the contrary, the traditional perspectives appear in this work in a novel form, imposing a revolutionary ethic of extreme consequences.

Both processes, the reevaluation and reformulation of the traditional populist approach and the development of a new vision, characterize Németh's treatment of the novel's central theme, Nelli's alienation. Reflecting more than a pattern of a literary tradition, more than a representation of an innate mystical quality of the mind, loneliness emerges in *Revulsion* as a necessary condition for man's sensibility, responsibility, strength, inner independence, and love. In spite of the obvious conflicts caused by their alienation, the four silent, lonely, more philosophically-minded characters of the novel demonstrate not only high moral standards, but also the ability to create human relationships of considerable depth. (For example, there is an intense emotional bond between Nelli, her father, Mrs. Takaró, and Aunt Szeréna, between Mrs. Takaró and her sons, between Aunt Szeréna and her relatives.) In contrast, worldliness and sociability appear as negative aspects of human nature, as masks for the emptiness, banality, and moral shallowness of life. Sanyi as well as his friends illustrate these qualities. Slenkai, "his breath smelling of tobacco," Dányi, "brutal, with watery eyes, and red face," the new head notary, "a walking advertisement for drugstores," and the little tax commissioner, "with his violet eyes and long thin face," appear as mediocre figures that demonstrate neither heart nor intellect but grotesquely oversized sexual needs. Likewise, the gre-

garious woman characters of the village are portrayed as chattery, gossipy, oversexed, vulgar, and ignorant. The farmer's wife, the "lovesick dove," as well as Rózsa, the little "red-ball of woman," seem to be interested in nothing but sex; and Marcsa's most important feature is stupidity. "She stares as if compelled to think of something very difficult that she cannot recall" (II, 65). Social gatherings (e.g., the visits of relatives or the company on every third Friday at the Takarós') emerge as useless and senseless occasions, demonstrating people's inability to communicate with each other. Indeed, in Nelli's view, guests just "invade the house with a broad smile and gaiety ready to be released; they eat and drink, fill up your day, and depart with illicit information gained from their spying" (II, 56). This contemptuous view of human nature and behavior, this unsympathetic portrayal of crowds and superficial social contacts in general, questions Nelli's assertion that her need for loneliness created the problem. Although she repeatedly identifies her isolation as the source of her conflicts, the novel reveals this state to be neither negative nor pathological but *essential* to achieving such human qualities as morality and understanding. A contradiction thus emerges between the first person narrator and the inner textual perspective, disclosing two distinctly different levels of perceptions: Nelli's personal account, which concentrates on her sexual revulsion toward Sanyi and an outside objective viewpoint, which focuses on the existential background of her alienation. In fact, societal and moral issues are investigated within the framework of the personal account; and *vice versa,* Nelli's personal feelings are explained and analyzed from the perspective of moral and social concerns. It is the interplay between these two perceptions, Nelli's own point of view and the broader and more general vision, that discloses the complexities of the book.

From Nelli's point of view, sexual revulsion toward Sanyi creates the marital blight; underlying themes, however, point to her spiritual and existential deprivation as the cause of the conflicts. In Nelli's perception the marriage represents sexual defeat and humiliation. As she says: "It is forbidden to squeeze the rolls in the bakery, but I am not protected in the same way. Can you imagine what it's like, Aunt Szeréna, to be at the mercy of ten fleshy fingers that are entitled to lay hold of you wherever they feel like it?" (II, 153). Ill-feelings and rejection overcome her with Sanyi's first visit, as she perceives his push "towards the house across a virgin snowfield" (I, 7). Coming uninvited, demanding time, attention, and space, he overwhelms her at first sight. Hoping to escape him, she flees to the kitchen to prepare a meal, but "by the time I'd finished peeling the first potatoes," she says, "he stuck his brown smile through

the crack of the kitchen door. . . . Obviously he attributed my sudden departure to some sort of virginal alarm that he liked immensely" (I, 23). As the house and field, her pride and joy, became suddenly soiled under his muddy boots, so too the kitchen is soiled by his "brown smile." She notices his "hard stubby fingers," and "those warm, chestnut eyes that looked at you as if trying to remind you of some mischief you had both committed" (I, 8). She is repulsed by his "gypsy" look, by his boisterous behavior, and by the pleasure he obviously takes in her. The development of their future relationship is marked by this first visit. She looks upon him with abhorrence and disgust, and the more they meet, the more intense her revulsion grows. Believing he desires nothing but to "assault and strip the amazon" from her so that "he could clutch the panting chick within," she sees him as dirty and brutal (I, 70). When confronted with the certainty of the marriage, she is overcome by horror. "I had seen animals;" she says, "but even the idea of doing the same with a man was too terrible" (I, 209). Indeed, she detests every minute spent with him. Her thoughts focus unceasingly on his "oily skin," his "sweaty hands," and his "cunning eyes" staring into the night. Obsessed by hatred for his physicality, Nelli extends her aversion later toward their only child. She sees in her "Sanyi's fingers, Sanyi's hair and Sanyi's selfish gaiety" (II, 291). Feeling overcome by this ever increasing revulsion, she kills him. Even after the murder, she remains besieged by repugnance: "My revulsion in bed," she says "the smell of sweat — not even Sanyi's smell but the smell of our whole marriage — were still so much alive in me that there was no room left for guilt" (II, 242). As a matter of fact, at this point, Nelli is free of "ordinary" moral considerations; perceiving the events from her own point of view, she holds the murder to be a direct outcome of her sexual violation, an inevitable rebellion of her misused virginity. "You brought this thing upon yourself," she says, standing by his corpse, "Why did you bring me back from Cenc? I had fled and I even told Aunt Szeréna that if I hadn't done so I would have jabbed a knife into you!" (II, 242).

In the context of the novel as a whole, however, the marriage represents more an arena of struggle between individual need and societal tradition, between personal freedom and external oppression, than an unfortunate conglomeration of contrasting sexual needs. This perspective is created by the appearance of multifarious themes, suggesting other than sexual interpretations of the events. First of all, by pointing to Nelli's romantic feelings toward other men, her portrayal indicates that the aversion toward Sanyi does not stem necessarily from pathological problems, but from the difference between their personalities.

Her interest in both Ernő and Imre allows for the possibility that under other circumstances, and with another man, she could have developed a better relationship. She falls in love with Ernő, and is crushed by their separation; then she feels attracted to Imre, daydreaming about a marriage with him. It is important, however, that both men are different from Sanyi; both are gentle, silent, and withdrawn; neither wants to own her; neither wants to overwhelm her. If she had married either of them, it appears, Nelli could have lived a better life. "Lonely walks with the dogs and silent work alongside another," she says, "this was what I longed for, what would give me happiness" (I, 192). It is thus because Sanyi's character and life style represent the opposite of this ideal, because his forceful and overwhelming personality contrasts with Nelli's basic needs, and because she is forced to marry and accept him, that she feels frustrated in her right to live the life of her choice. Secondly, by investigating the nature of these contrasting needs, the presentation establishes links between power and humiliation, between force and weakness, transforming those connections into implicit moral comment. Indeed, thematic and structural parallels inherent in the novel underline this pattern of Nelli's decreasing and Sanyi's increasing strength. They focus on her plight in the face of merciless circumstances that force her to submit and that lead Sanyi to "victory" at her cost. By periodic references to the past, the reader is constantly reminded that it is Sanyi who pushes himself to Nelli's side when her father dies, takes over the land bit by bit, and makes himself indispensable to her sick and helpless mother. Simultaneously, recurring motifs point to the anguish that befalls Nelli and to the pressure put on her by friends and relatives. Thus, intrinsic in the text is the intention to demonstrate that the marriage is built on an abomination, on the violation of Nelli's free will. As she says, "I was transformed from rebellion to surrender. I was exactly like a horse whipped into submission. Father's death, Mother's helplessness and Sanyi's siege were not arguments capable of rational assessment but forces which had broken me" (I, 191-92). In addition, newly developing situations and events unceasingly demonstrate that the couple's initial pattern of inequality never changes. Analyzing the textual evidence not only elucidates issues more universal in nature than Nelli's personal conflicts, but reveals by implication the metaphysical position of the novel. Since the heroine's sexual dilemma represents more the *consequence* than the *cause* of her lack of autonomy, Nelli's struggle for sexual freedom may be seen as a paradigm of the human struggle for self-determination. "I might have endured it," she says, "if my husband had also been a lonely soul, but Sanyi doesn't even give me

room to breathe" (II, 154). Feeling pursued, invaded, and finally consumed by Sanyi, Nelli has no life of her own. If she is to survive, she must regain her own independence: she must escape her husband. Getting away from him for just a few days, she appears to be liberated: "As if I had emerged at last from a long dark tunnel, as if I were gradually learning — like a patient after an eye operation — what leaves and flowers actually are" (I, 157). Her description of the newly gained sexual independence not only discloses relief from the tension crippling her life, but a metaphysical encounter with freedom as well. "Poetic words," she says, "such as 'freedom' and 'a new life,' jump up and down in my heart and in my mouth" (II, 157). By pointing to the intensity of this experience, Németh emphasizes the essential role of freedom for human life and dignity, and conversely, the grave consequences of its absence. When taken back to Fencs by Sanyi, Nelli feels sentenced to death. "The world," she says, "remains one unbroken dream; like a coffin pushed into the grave, people passively glide toward their fate" (II, 190). This vision of freedom as the ultimate necessity of man's existence suggests additional perspectives from which Nelli's personality, her coldness, emotional detachment, chastity, and her need for isolation have to be understood. Because these characteristics appear as parts of her essence — the novel never examines whether acquired or innate — they are expressions of her freedom of choice. When they are violated, her freedom to choose herself is violated. In this light, Nelli's virginity not only represents a basic choice of her being, a state apart from the "muddy waters of humanity," but also a consequence of her right to "remain enveloped in a layer of cool air." Hence, those who force her to surrender this right obstruct the fulfillment of a higher order. As she says:

> Where virginity defends itself with intense revulsion, there is a higher force that forbids its violation. And if it should be violated, it will revenge itself like an outraged angel, tearing at its bondage and murdering if it must to set itself free (II, 189).

Inherent in this vision is the idea of personal freedom as the supreme metaphysical criterion of human existence. Because it is Nelli's *right* to choose to withdraw from the world and to remain untouched, in Németh's conception, no other consideration may supersede the imperative of this choice.

Using this metaphysical criterion to illuminate practical situations, Németh demonstrates that human relationships built on the obstruction of either partner's freedom bring about destruction for both. Actually, Sanyi is not guilty of anything worse than ignorance and insensitivity, yet his disregard for Nelli's freedom destroys her and brings about his

own death. Although at first he appears to be the "winner," in the end he becomes as much the victim of their relationship as Nelli. Actually, Németh not only criticizes the institution of marriage that tolerates, even fosters, the economic and emotional dependency of woman, but he also points to the disastrous consequences of oppression. It is certainly no coincidence that Nelli gets away with Sanyi's murder. From the metaphysical perspective of the novel not murder but the obstruction of freedom emerges as the worst crime one human being can commit against another; elimination of those who violate this principle thus becomes a necessity for re-establishing justice and order in the world.

Although *Revulsion* deals extensively with the sexual problems of an individual woman, analysis reveals the work to be a criticism of not only Hungarian society and the institution of marriage, but of general societal structures which restrict freedom. By depicting Nelli's isolation as a traditional state of her milieu, Németh points to the tragic conditions prevailing in the Hungary of that time; by depicting isolation as a necessary state for gaining insight and dignity, Németh points to the tragic condition of humanity. The author's insistence on Nelli's right to be different suggests the possibility of a world where men *and* women are equally free, and thus have the inviolable right to self-determination. Indeed, Németh reveals freedom as a metaphysical force that when restricted, will assert itself regardless of the sacrifice required.

NOTES

1. László Németh, *Iszony*, 2nd ed. (1947; reprint ed., Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1975). All further references to this book will be in my own translation and cited in the text with volume and page numbers. The novel has been translated into English [*Revulsion*, trans. Kathleen Szasz (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1965)].
2. Taken from László Vekerdi, *Németh László: alkotásai és vallomásai tükrében*, Arcok és Vallomások (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Zsebkönyvtár, 1970), p. 252, my own translation.
3. Vekerdi, pp. 252-53.
4. Vekerdi, p. 248.
5. Vekerdi, p. 248.
6. Although official Hungarian criticism still blames Németh for his involvement in the "third road" concept, his creative output is not rejected anymore. Cf. Tibor Klaniczay, József Szauder, and Miklós Szabolcsi, *History of Hungarian Literature*, trans. József Hatvany and István Farkas, ed. Miklós Szabolcsi (Budapest: Corvina Press, 1964), pp. 257-61. It is even possible to analyze Németh from the psychological perspective. Cf. László Fülöp, "Lélekrajz és létértelmezés: (Jegyzetek az *Iszonyról*)," *Studia Litteraria* 12 (1974): 97-117.
7. Taken from the jacket of *Iszony* 1975 edition.

8. Lothar Sträter, "László Németh: Lehrer seiner Nation," *Frankfurter Hefte* 27 (1972): 363-70; cf. H. T. Anderson, "Németh, László: *Revulsion*," *Bestseller*, 15 March 1966, pp. 464 65; A. Homer, "László Németh: *Revulsion*," *Books and Bookmen*, December 1965, pp. 43 44; Robert L. Stilwell, "Grounds for Despair," *Saturday Rreview*, 12 March 1966, p. 36. The reason for the lack of enthusiasm among the English-speaking critics probably springs from the shortcomings of the English translation.
9. Károly Kerényi, "On László Németh," *The Hungarian Quarterly* 3, no. 1 2 (1962): 36.
10. Kerényi, p. 38.
11. Various sociological studies written on the life of Hungarian peasants and farm workers between the two world wars point to both the hardship and isolation of these people and to the economic conditions and chronic ailments of Hungarian society. One of the best known of this genre is Gyula Illyés' book *Pusztàk népe* (1936; reprint ed., Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1972), which offers a realistic picture of the ordeal and frustration of the people in the puszta.
12. Initiated by musicians and writers before the First World War, the populist movement rose to stir interest in folk culture and tradition. Later, historians, sociologists, and economists joined the ranks of the artists to demand social and political reform. Although the members of both groups represent complex and intricate political and aesthetic viewpoints, their interest in peasant themes and problems, their nationalist concept of the "special Hungarian road," their focus on the *corpus hungaricum*, point to a common style, to common concerns, perspectives and goals. It is customary to list Zsigmond Móricz, Dezső Szabó, József Erdélyi, Gyula Illyés, and László Németh among the populists. Cf. "Hungary's Populist Writers," *East Europe* 8, no. 2 (1959): 32 41; Joseph Remenyi, *Hungarian Writers and Literature: Modern Novelists, Critics, and Poets*, ed. J. Molnar (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1964), pp. 33 34; Szabolcsi, pp. 149-266.
13. Both extremes, the stoic peasant figures who resign themselves to melancholy and those who violently rebel against their oppressed position, appear in the works of Móricz as well as in the works of Ferenc Móra, Dezső Szabó, József Erdélyi, Gyula Illyés, and László Németh.

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Literature and Politics in Germany of the 1830s: Karl Beck's Role in the *Junges Deutschland* Movement

Agnes Huszar Vardy

The purpose of this study is to describe briefly the reception of Karl Beck (1817–1879), a Hungarian-born Jewish-German poet, by the members of the Young Germany movement of the 1830s, and to show that — similarly to most of his fellow Young Germans — Beck's literary fame was largely due to his involvement in that movement.[1] In other words, we contend that it was not Beck's lyrical talent that made him into a notable spokesman of Young Germany. Rather, it was his association with the Young Germans and his ability to express in an unusually daring tone the social, political and artistic needs of his age that lifted him out of obscurity and made him for a while a "celebrated poet" of Germandom.

Junges Deutschland

Contrary to some of its counterparts (e.g., Young Europe, Young Italy, Young Poland), Young Germany or *Junges Deutschland* was not a radical political, but a literary movement.[2] This does not, of course, mean that *Junges Deutschland* lacked political goals; for indeed it did not. But as it never really took the shape of a formal organization, and since its members were all poets, writers and journalists who limited their activities to propaganda in a literary form, *Junges Deutschland* never even came close to resembling the political-conspiratorial make-up of Mazzini's Young Italy.[3] And this holds true even though the majority of the Young Germans concentrated on writing political poetry and other forms of political literature.

Junges Deutschland, therefore, was primarily an informal literary movement, whose members were drawn together by their attachment to liberalism, by their belief in social and political progress, and by their resolve to propagate their convictions through creative works. Thus, instead of establishing conspirational organizations for the purpose of

overthrowing the existing political regimes, they went to war against the literary and artistic ideas of *l'art pour l'art* established by Goethe in Germany. They rejected Goethe's world view, shifting their admiration to Schiller who emerged as the true champion of political and personal freedom. By using literature to expose the social and political needs of their age, the Young Germans became powerful exponents and practitioners of the so-called *Tendenzliteratur.* Thus they proclaimed in *belles-lettres* the need to deal with urgent social, economic, and political problems, as did Victor Hugo and other French Romanticists before them.

In addition to Heinrich Heine and Ludwig Börne — respectively the greatest German lyricist and the greatest political publicist of that period — the key members of *Junges Deutschland* were Ludwig Wienbarg, Karl Gutzkow, Heinrich Laube and Theodore Mundt. But their ranks also included such lesser writers and poets as Gustav Kühne, Georg Herwegh, Ferdinand Freiligrath, Hermann Marggraf, Karl Herlossohn, Ernest Wilkomm, as well as the already-mentioned Karl Beck.

Throughout the existence of this movement in the 1830s and early 1840s, the Young Germans' primary source of inspiration was Paris, or more specifically Heine's and Börne's radical and satirical writings produced in Paris. Heine and Börne were the most politicized German creative writers of that period. Because of their open criticism of Metternich's oppressive political system in Germany, they both ended up as political exiles in Paris. But their absence from Germany did not lessen their influence upon the Young Germans. On the contrary, their exile may even have increased their influence. Certainly their politically-inspired writings, such as Heine's *Französische Zustände* (1832) and Börne's *Briefe aus Paris* (1830-1834), greatly contributed to keeping *Junges Deutschland* in existence under the strictest censorship. By writing about the ideals of liberalism and about French developments after the July Revolution of 1830, and by contrasting the French political and social scene with the situation of Metternich's Germany, Heine and Börne kept the flame of hope alive in the hearts of their fellow poets and countrymen. This was especially true of Börne's *Briefe aus Paris,* which soon became the handbook of contemporary liberalism, not only in Germany and the German-speaking lands, but also in the non-German provinces of the Habsburg Empire.

Most of the Young Germans who remained at home congregated in Leipzig, in that period the center of German intellectual and literary life. Called "little Paris," Leipzig was indeed the meeting place of both aspiring, as well as established poets, writers and journalists. Under the

leadership of Gustav Kühne, the members of Young Germany grouped around the newspaper *Die Zeitung für die elegante Welt.* From an aesthetic point of view, however, few of the Young German writers possessed more than average literary talent. Yet, thanks to the demands of the reform-minded public, and the vigorous publicistic activities of the group, the Young Germans enjoyed considerable influence and prestige. These circumstances momentarily heightened the appreciation of their literary output — an acclaim that later proved to have been largely undeserved. But having turned out to be average poets who achieved recognition primarily because of the timeliness of their topics and their daring expression of the needs of their age, does not necessarily lessen their role in literary history. And because this role, at least collectively, was an influential and admirable one, all of the Young Germans — including Karl Beck — deserve to be remembered by posterity.

Karl Beck

Beck appeared on the German literary scene like a youthful meteor who quickly captivated most of the progressive literati around him. Karl Gutzkow referred to him as the "German Byron"; Friedrich Engels compared him to Schiller.[4] Yet a few years later, virtually everyone forgot about him.

Born in 1817 to a Jewish grain merchant in the southern Hungarian town of Baja, Beck was hardly destined by birth to become a spokesman for German liberalism. The elder Beck ignored the future poet's natural artistic inclination, which showed already at an early age, and strongly discouraged his son's plans for a literary career. But this did not deter young Beck, who continued his interest and won several prizes in literary competitions both at the Baja Elementary School, as well as during his gymnasium studies in Pest.

After completing his secondary education in 1835, Beck enrolled at the School of Medicine in Vienna. He decided to study medicine not because of his fondness for the field, but because medicine was one of the few professions open to Jews. Thus, not surprisingly, during his stay in Vienna he concentrated almost exclusively on his literary interests, in the company of students with similar bent. It was at this time that he established a life-long friendship with the aspiring young poet, Jakob Kaufmann. Their correspondence reveals a great deal about Beck's poetical career.

Within a year of entering medical school young Beck's aversion to the

study of medicine became so intense that he abandoned his studies and returned to Hungary. He left Vienna with a heavy heart, but with an even greater determination to make a name for himself in literature. While serving as an apprentice at a Pest granary, Beck made several unsuccessful attempts to have his poems published. But since he wrote in German, this goal proved to be even more difficult to achieve than he had expected. Influenced by the surging national revival of the 1830s Magyar intellectuals no longer favored poets and writers who failed to use Magyar as their means of literary expression. But because Beck could not, or would not forsake German for Magyar, he had no other option but to try his luck in the German-speaking world. Since he was already acquainted with some of the publications of the Young German writers whose ideas and aspirations greatly appealed to him, he decided to move to Leipzig where he hoped to gain at least some degree of poetical recognition.

Beck among the Young Germans

A virtually unknown foreigner in a strange country, Beck found it difficult to strike roots in Leipzig. It took him a while before he was able to join the ranks of the Young Germans. To make matters worse, he was constantly under surveillance by the local police, who were suspicious of every newcomer. In order to remain in Leipzig, he was forced to enroll in the School of Medicine at the University, even though he had already abandoned his medical studies in Vienna. These initial difficulties drove young Beck into a melancholic state of mind that often haunted him in times of spiritual crises. The bitter tone of his letters to his friend Kaufmann in Vienna attest to this fact. "I am so discouraged that I do not even attempt to justify my silence," he wrote in a letter dated September 9, 1836. "Even now I can bring myself to write only a few lines. But my thoroughly unfavorable and hopeless situation explains everything. . ."[5] Although some of his poems were published in newspapers already during the late summer of 1836, his pessimism lingered. This may explain why he made no attempt to publish his collected poems. He admitted that his individual poems were accepted by the Leipzig newspapers and read with "great enthusiasm."[6] But he found that "the publishers are extremely difficult to deal with and pay very little."[7] And he simply lacked the strength to argue with them.

During his first months in Leipzig, therefore, Beck saw very little chance for poetic recognition. As a result he encouraged his friend Kaufmann, who also planned to move to Leipzig, to have his poems

published in Vienna, before tempting his fate in the midst of the Young Germans. Beck believed that one had to have a volume of poetry published first in order to gain any kind of recognition in Leipzig. As he wrote to Kaufmann: "Germany is not at all like you imagine it to be."[8]

Yet, despite his relatively slow start and initial disappointment, Beck remained in Leipzig. This proved to be a wise decision, for in the course of the following year his fortune changed radically. In 1837 the prestigious *Die Zeitung für die elegante Welt* began to publish his poems, which immediately lent him a certain degree of recognition. His early poems included "Auszug aus Ägypten," "Mondnacht," as well as a group of sonnets entitled "Fannys Tagebuch." He dedicated the latter to Fanny Tarnow, who enjoyed wide renown as a translator of French literary pieces. She was also one of the leading intellectuals in Leipzig literary society and a regular contributor to *Die Zeitung für die elegante Welt.* Contrary to some claims, Beck did not fall in love with the older "lady of the world." But Fanny's superior intellect made a lasting impression on the young and still rather provincial poet. Beck soon became a frequent guest in Fanny's literary salon, where he mingled with a number of noted literary figures, many of whom influenced his personal and poetical development. As a result of these exposures, Beck began to feel more at home in Leipzig society. His lyrical expression also showed a marked improvement. All this resulted in the growing recognition of his talents, and by the middle of 1837 he had won the attention and approval of most of Leipzig's progressive writers and intellectuals. The influential Gustav Kühne became his closest mentor. In one of his letters, Kühne revealed his enthusiasm for the lyrical talent of the young poet by referring to Beck as his "extraordinary intellectual child."[9] He published Beck's poems in his newspaper, adding his own laudatory introductions and enthusiastic comments. Kühne also introduced Beck to all of the leading members of the Leipzig literary societies. Moreover, he arranged meetings between Beck and many of the prominent German writers who visited Leipzig during these years, and who were either members or supporters of the *Junges Deutschland* movement. In this way, Beck established a close relationship with the acknowledged leaders of the movement, which included Gutzkow, Laube, as well as Wienbarg, all of whom were favorably impressed with the young poet.

Beck created a sensation in Leipzig literary circles not only with his poetry, but also with his appearance and personal habits. Described by fellow poet Franz Dingelstedt as "short, young looking, slight of stature with a strikingly handsome face, dominated by eyes of deep blue framed by long lashes,"[10] Beck generally created a favorable impression.

But his appearance was deceiving. His open countenance concealed an introverted personality, which occasionally exhibited eccentric behavior. We know from Kühne's memoires that Beck often felt out of place at social gatherings. He would frequently sit alone in a corner for hours, smoking a cigar. Then he would suddenly stand up, thank his hosts for their kind hospitality, for "allowing him to sit in silence for hours,"[11] and then he would quickly take his leave. Kühne's recollections reveal that Beck was considered an eccentric and his eccentricity also extended to his manner of dress. This was also noted by the contemporary literary historian Rudolf Gottschall, who described the attention Beck aroused with his picturesque Hungarian attire.[12] The braided waistcoat and the spurred boots provided a peculiar sight in Leipzig society and added a touch of the "exotic" to Beck's personality. Beck further enhanced his romantic appeal by hinting that he was a political emigré, who had been driven from his homeland because of his liberal views and his love of freedom. These devices enhanced Beck's popularity, and Kühne and his friends were proud of their "Magyar poet,"[13] whom they treated as if he were "some rare phenomenon from a far-off never-neverland."[14] Gotschall further substantiated Beck's popularity in his memoires when he recalled that "when the topic of conversation turned to Karl Beck, I found everywhere the same enthusiasm. [He] was the pampered darling of the Young German journalists."[15] Thus, despite his initial difficulties, Beck's poetry and his personality combined to earn him widespread recognition. In fact, he soon came to be celebrated as the "great hope" of the *Junges Deutschland* movement.

Beck's Development as a Poet

Young Beck was quickly swept up by the ideas of Young Germany. Its ideologies and objectives were not entirely new to him. He had become acquainted with the movement through reading and through his involvement in the Viennese literary circles. But not until arriving in Leipzig did he make the goals of *Junges Deutschland* his own. He gave expression to their hopes and aspirations in his poetry, but without fully appreciating the significance of the great contemporary and social issues.[16] His lack of full comprehension is best shown by the confused and disorderly fashion he incorporated the dominant ideas of the age into his poetry. But Beck's fellow poets and writers were unaware of this confusion. Like Beck, they too lacked an adequate background for properly understanding the basic social and political issues of their age. This in turn explains their overestimation of Beck's poetical talents, as well as

their reasons for placing so much hope in him as one of the major advocates and defenders of the ideals of the age.

Even the titles of Beck's poems written during this time reveal the extent to which he immersed himself in the ideals of the Young German writers. Titles such as "Der Gefangene," "An Heinrich Heine," "Schillers Haus in Gohlis," and similar headings characterize the content of his poetry. During this time, Börne's influence also began to show in Beck's poetry. He was especially impressed by the older poet's love of freedom, and by his willingness to enlist his poetical talents in the service of progress. Beck was proud to acknowledge Börne as his master. Beck's admiration for Börne is especially evident in a cycle of poems entitled "Neue Bibel," in which he eulogized Börne on the occasion of his death in 1837. In these lyrics Beck portrayed Börne as the unequalled champion of human rights and freedom of expression, a man who even refused to enter heaven without being assured complete personal freedom. Upon reaching the gates of the other world Börne's first question was: "Are we to remain free in your heaven?"[17] There is a great deal of warmth and enthusiasm in these poems, and they are devoid of the customary pathos, excessive description, and forced imagery that dominated much of his previous poetry.

One of the *Junges Deutschland* writers' most important literary and intellectual means of expression was the use of satire, sarcasm, and irony. A mocking derisive tone dominated the lyrics of the age, which was used primarily as a form of attack against the prevailing social, political, and economic system that stood in the way of progress. But satire was also employed as a weapon in battles involving matters of principle and personal disagreements. Besides Heine, one of the lesser poets who used an extraordinarily cynical style was Ludwig Hermann Wolfram, a man of reactionary sympathies, who frequently made Kühne's literary friends the object of his mockery.[18] In his *Dichter Nachtwegen* Wolfram ridiculed the ideals of the *Junges Deutschland* movement, but he was particularly critical of the Leipzig circle. His most cutting remarks, however, were reserved for Karl Beck, whom he portrayed in his long epic poem, *Faust*, as one of the evil spirits. Wolfram thus belittled the Young Germany movement by satirizing the achievements of its members, and by cynically parodying their alleged "rescue" of German literature from total annihilation.

Such incidents disturbed, but could not alter the unfolding of the Leipzig circle. Nor could they hinder Beck's poetical success and popularity. Beck achieved the first climax of his fame in 1838 with the publication of his first volume of poetry entitled *Nächte. Gepanzerte*

Lieder. This collection, and in particular the poem "Die Eisenbahn," composed on the occasion of the opening of the railroad line in Dresden, quickly popularized Beck's name throughout the German-speaking world. The poem is an allegory, a praise of the railroad system which Beck saw as the zenith of technological achievements. He considered the railroad as the embodiment of the new world to come. According to one of his later critics, Hermann Solomon, Beck displayed in this poem "the spirit of a prophet predicting the change that the new invention would initiate not only in the area of trade, but also on the political front."[19] "Die Eisenbahn" appeared in many newspapers in Germany, and "ignited everyone, and made its author an overnight success."[20] Some critics even felt that the publication of Beck's first volume resulted from the success of "Die Eisenbahn," which singled him out of the ranks of the hundreds of anonymous poets.

"Die Eisenbahn" was undoubtedly an oustanding poem with an extraordinary impact upon contemporary readers. Its success has been noted by many critics, including Rudolf Gotschall, who later became one of Beck's closest friends and admirers. But it is doubtful whether this poem was the only reason why Beck's first collected volume was accepted for publication. The German world of the 1830s supported hundreds of poets endowed with modest talent, and most of them were able to secure a publisher sooner or later. In view of his noted poetic endeavors and growing popularity in 1837, it seems rather unlikely that Beck would have been an exception to this rule. It is more likely that "Die Eisenbahn" merely contributed to the success of his first volume and thus enhanced his poetic fame. On the other hand, the popularity of Beck's first volume also prompted the reading public to overestimate his lyrical talents. In the long run, his success may have contributed indirectly to his downfall, because later — when he was unable to satisfy the hopes that were placed in him as a poet — the disappointed critics and public first turned against him, and later forgot about him entirely.

Contemporary Assessment of Beck's Poetry

The appearance of Beck's first volume increased both his reputation and the number of his critics. Studies dealing with his poetry and literary works dedicated to him appeared in great number, all of which served as measures of his success and popularity. Among his admirers was Moritz Carrier, the renowned Berlin aesthetician and literary critic who sent a poem entitled "Freundesgruss an Karl Beck" to the editors of *Die Zeitung für die elegante Welt.*[21] Praising Beck's lyrical talents, Carrier

welcomed the young poet as a worthy heir to the ideals of Ludwig Börne. In his poem he portrayed Beck as the legendary phoenix who appears as the reincarnation of Börne and has the noble calling to continue the older poet's struggle for the freedom of the beloved fatherland.

Julius Seidlitz, another critic, also emerged as a Beck supporter. In one of his works, Seidlitz characterized Beck as a young poet still in the *Sturm und Drang* stage of his development, when "the poet wants to reform, to destroy and to rebuild; within him evolves a dark feeling that he must create. But in the darkness of feeling, destruction appears to him as creation."[22] And Seidlitz appeared to have found the key to Beck's poetry. Like all *Sturm und Drang* literature, it too contained a wealth of ideas, vitality and originality — as well as uncontrolled emotions. *Sturm und Drang* was after all a stage of adolescence more attuned to emotion than to rationality. For this reason, Beck's poems lacked a guiding principle which might have produced positive answers, instead of merely criticizing the existing social system. While pointing to this elemental nature of his poetry, Seidlitz also considered Beck destined for greater things, and predicted that the young poet would score his future success in the realm of epic poetry.

Beck's fellow poets were no less enthusiastic about his first volume than his critics. Ferdinand Freiligrath, another well-known poet of the *Junges Deutschland* movement, for example, called Beck "a great fellow, for whom one must have respect — [his poems have] atmosphere, ideas, style and form, all of these expressed in an extraordinary manner."[23] Georg Herwegh, another poet, believed that Beck's poetry in general contains a great deal of "gold," and he is in possession of the Promethean fire which is indicative of greatness.[24] But as it turned out, in the long run, Beck was unable to fulfill the expectations that contemporary critics and fellow poets placed in him.

Although by the end of the 1830s Karl Beck emerged as one of the popular voices of the Young Germany movement, his fame did not endure long. As mentioned earlier, his success resulted more from his ability to voice the temporary needs of society than from genuine lyrical talent. Thus, when the political climate changed, when it was no longer sufficient to criticize, when one also had to suggest positive programs for the restructuring of society, Beck could no longer fulfill the demands of the age, and his popularity correspondingly waned. He soon disappeared into relative oblivion — as did also the *Junges Deutschland* movement which had served as the pedestal of his temporary triumphs. Beck outlived his sudden popularity by several decades. He continued to write poetry and published several notable collections in the years that fol-

lowed. Yet, he was never again as widely acclaimed and celebrated as he had been during his stay in Leipzig, as a member of the *Junges Deutschland* movement.

NOTES

1. Some of the more important studies on Beck are as follows: Rudolf Gottschall, "Karl Beck," *Unsere Zeit* (Leipzig, 1880), pp. 801-823; Robert Gragger, "Beck Károly és a német politikai költészet," [Karl Beck and German Political Poetry] *Budapesti Szemle* 138 (1909): 268-299, 448-460, 139: 120-133, 277-297; Eduard Fechtner, *Karl Beck. Sein Leben und Dichten* (Wien, 1912); Heinrich Nellen, *Aus Karl Becks dichterischer Frühzeit*. Diss., Münster, 1908; Ernst Thiel, *Karl Becks literarische Entwicklung*. Diss., Breslau, 1938; Antal Mádl, *Politische Dichtung in Österreich 1830-1848* (Budapest, 1969), pp. 108-148; Ágnes Mária Várdy, *Karl Beck élete és költői pályája* [Karl Beck's Life and Poetical Career], Diss., Budapest, 1970; Ágnes Huszár Várdy, *Karl Beck* (Budapest, in press).
2. On the *Junges Deutschland* movement in general see: Ludwig Geiger, *Das junge Deutschland und die preussische Zensur* (Hamburg, 1886); Johannes Proells, *Das junge Deutschland* (Stuttgart, 1892); Georg Brandes, *Das junge Deutschland* (Berlin, 1904); Desider Bader, *Metternich und das junge Deutschland* (Pécs, 1934); *Literatur des Vormärz*, ed. by Kollektiv für *Literaturgeschichte* (Erfurt, 1958); Julius Marx, *Die österreichische Zensur im Vormärz* (Wien, 1959); Walter Dietze, *Junges Deutschland und deutsche Klassik. Zur Ästhetik und Literaturtheorie des Vormärz*, 3rd ed. (Berlin, 1962); and Helmut Koopman, *Das junge Deutschland* (Stuttgart, 1967/1968).
3. Walter Dietze demonstrated that by the mid-1830s a number of like-minded young German poets and writers were in fact in the process of establishing a formal alliance, and the realization of this goal was stopped only by an edict of the German Confederation which banned Heine's writings, along with those of Rudolf Wienbarg, Karl Gutzkow, Heinrich Laube and Theodor Mundt. Since Wienbarg's *Ästhetische Feldzüge* (1834) was dedicated to "Young Germany," this name was given to the above writers and poets and to others who held similar views. See Dietze, *Junges Deutschland*, p. 75.
4. See *Telegraphen für Deutschland*, 1839; Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *Über Kunst und Literatur* (Berlin, 1950), p. 446; and Ernst Hanisch, "Der junge Engels und die österreichische Literatur des Vormärz," *Österreich in Geschichte und Literatur* 19 (1975): 160-169.
5. As quoted by Nellen, *Aus Karl Becks dichterischer Frühzeit*, p. 53.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Letter quoted by Adolf Kohut, "Ungedrucktes von Karl Beck," *Internazionale Literaturberichte* (1898), p. 375.
9. Edgar Pierson, *Gustav Kühne. Lebensbild und Briefwechsel* (Dresden-Leipzig, 1890), p. 63.
10. See *Der Salon. Wochenschrift für Heimat und Fremde*, no. 12 (1839): 106-107.
11. Gustav Kühne, "Karl Beck," *Westermanns Illustrierte Monatshefte* 46 (1879): 498.
12. Gottschall, "Karl Beck," p. 803.

13. In a letter dated September 9, 1836, Beck wrote the following to his friend Jakob Kaufmann: "Like all writers here, I too have the title of 'doctor,' and they call me the Magyar poet who strikes like thunder with his songs." Kohut, "Ungedrucktes von Karl Beck," p. 375.
14. Gragger, "Beck Károly," 138: 283.
15. Gottschall, "Karl Beck," p. 804.
16. Beck's belief that one of the dominant ideas of the Young German writers was the reevaluation of the role of the poet was expressed, among others, in his poem "Sultan." Here he portrayed the poet as a Turkish sultan, who in spite of all manner of temptation, never loses sight of his noble goal, i.e., to win the battle for the glory of his homeland. In another poem, "Märchen," Beck stated that the poet "may no longer tell stories. . . . This Age of Seriousness will no longer believe them." Yet Beck was never able to state specifically how a poet should become a leader in society. See Karl Beck, *Nächte. Gepanzerte Lieder* (Leipzig, 1838), pp. 7-9, 148.
17. Beck, *Nächte*, p. 169.
18. See F. Marlowe [L. H. Wolfram], *Faust ein dramatisches Gedicht in drei Abschnitten* (Leipzig, 1838), also reprinted in Otto Neurath, *Neudrücke literarhistorischer Seltenheiten* (Berlin, 1906), no. 6.
19. Quoted in Nellen, *Aus Karl Becks dichterischer Frühzeit*, p. 57.
20. Ibid.
21. Gragger, "Beck Károly," 138: 287.
22. Julius Seidlitz, *Die Poesie und die Poeten Österreichs im Jahre 1836*, 2 vols. (Grimma, 1837), 2: 102.
23. Wilhelm Buchner, *Ferdinand Freiligrath. Ein Dichterleben in Briefen*, 2 vols. (Lahr, 1881), 2: 266.
24. Georg Herwegh, *Gedichte und kritische Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1839 und 1840. Herweghs Werke*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1845), 2: 76.

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REVIEW ARTICLES

Castle Building and Its Social Significance in Medieval Hungary

S. B. Várdy

Vár és társadalom a 13.-14. századi Magyarországon [Castle and Society in 13th and 14th-Century Hungary] (Studies in Historical Sciences, New Series, no. 82). By Erik Fügedi. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1977, 219 pp. *Regélő magyar várak* [Fabling Hungarian Castles]. Edited by Amália Bujtás. Budapest: Minerva, 1977. 213 pp.

The history of Hungarian fortification and castle-building has been a subject of Hungarian historiography ever since the 1870s, when Béla Czobor wrote his pioneering study, "Hungary's Medieval Castles."[1] Yet, neither the reasons, nor the social consequences of castle-building has really become a central research topic of Hungarian historians; and — despite the appearance of a number of significant works in the course of the past two decades — this relative lack of attention is still evident today. Most of the recent works — including those by the prolific "dean" of Hungarian fortification historians, László Gerő — deal only with the architectural and artistic significance of Hungarian castles, and pay little attention to their social, economic and political significance.[2] It was this vacuum in Hungarian fortification studies that prompted Erik Fügedi — a product of Elemér Mályusz's famed Ethnohistory School at the University of Budapest — to try to deal with this question anew, and in particular to evaluate the social and economic implications of the great wave of castle building that flared up in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Fügedi undertook this task by collecting a vast amount of data on 330 Hungarian castles built between c. 1222 and 1400, and then organizing much of this data under six separate headings in the appendix of his work.

In discussing the history of fortifications in Hungary — and here, of course, the reference is to "Historic" or Greater Hungary — Fügedi points out that their origins go back to many centuries before the

traditional Magyar conquest in the late ninth century. Some of these were Roman *castri,* while others were Avar or Slavic earthen or wooden fortresses. With the Christianization of Hungary and with the foundation and expansion of the royal counties by King St. Stephen and by his successors, many of these earlier *castri* and fortresses became the "local administrative centers" in this new network of royal administration. But the majority of these fortresses were still made of perishable material (i.e. wood and earth), and remained so right up to the thirteenth century, when a completely different type of fortress began to spread into Hungary. This was the well-known stone castle of Western Europe, that was usually built in inaccessible places, such as protruding hill tops, or within difficult-to-penetrate swamps, and contrary to its predecessors, was built largely for defensive purposes.

Hitherto Hungarian historians have generally presumed that this new castle-building was solely the result of the Mongol devastations of Hungary (1241-1242), which demonstrated that only stone fortifications and masonry structures could withstand such attacks. While this view is still correct to a large degree, Fügedi's research has proved conclusively that this new type of castle was being built in Hungary at least two decades prior to the Mongol conquest. Thus, discounting various royal fortresses that were partially built of stone even earlier (e.g. Pozsony, Moson, Sopron, Abaújvár, Vasvár), some fortified royal cities (e.g. Fehérvár, Esztergom, Veszprém, Győr, Nyitra, Komárom), and a number of fortified monasteries (e.g. Tihany, Pannonhalma, Zalavár), Fügedi found at least ten fortresses of the new type that had been built during the 1220s and 1230s. These include Léka, Németújvár, Borostyánkő, Óvár, Kobald, Fülek, Jolsva, Füzér, Toboly and Vécs. It is reflective of contemporary power relations in East Central Europe that half of these early stone fortresses faced the West, and thus were intended to defend Hungary from her most powerful immediate neighbor, the Holy Roman Empire. While this recognition is significant, it is equally important that three of these castles — Fülek, Kobald and Füzér — were not in royal hands, but were held by members of the increasingly powerful aristocratic families. This phenomenon was rather new in Hungarian history. Up to 1222 only the kings of Hungary had the right to build and to hold fortifications in the country, and not until the second half of the weak and inefficient rule of Andrew II (1205-1235) did they relinquish this monopoly. This was the direct result of the declining royal power in Hungary, which was also manifested by the promulgation of the Golden Bull of 1222, exacted from the weak king by members of the lower nobility. The decline of royal (central) power went

hand-in-hand with the distribution of much of the royal estates to the nobility, which in turn decreased the monarch's power base. It was during this period that some of the most powerful barons gained the right to build stone castles on their own estates. This change of policy soon resulted in the erection of a few private castles, whose numbers increased rapidly after the Mongol devastation. The latter increase was the direct result of Béla IV's new policy, which not only permitted, but demanded that the largest estate owners erect stone fortresses on their property. But contrary to earlier assumptions, Béla IV did not initiate the custom of permitting private lords to build their own castles; he simply speeded up an already existing tradition that had been introduced by his father during the 1220s.

As a result of Béla IV's policy of encouraging castle-building, between 1242 and 1400 at least 320 additional fortresses were constructed in Hungary, nearly seventy-five percent of which were built during the six decades between 1260 and 1330. The main epoch of medieval Hungarian castle-building, therefore, coincided with the critical period that encompassed the late Árpádian and the early Anjou periods in the country's history. This was the period that witnessed the total collapse and then the slow regeneration of royal power, as well as the temporary rise of a number of powerful barons to the position of near-independent provincial lords, who carved virtual mini-kingdoms out of the country's border regions (e.g. M. Csák, A. Aba, H. Kőszegi, B. Kopasz). Hungary's unity was not re-established until the 1320s and 1330s, when the new Anjou dynasty finally managed to cut down these oligarchs and restored the prestige and power of the monarchy.

In light of the above, it is evident that the policy of the Hungarian monarchs in the thirteenth century, which permitted and encouraged castle-building by private lords, had for a period undermined the power of the same monarchs. The laxening of royal control and the distribution of royal estates to the members of the upper nobility also resulted in the termination of the system of "royal counties," and permitted the latter to extend their control also over the lower nobility. Many of these became household vassals (*familiaris*) of the castle-owning barons, and thus came to constitute a dependent noble class. It was to regain their independence and to protect their collective class privileges that they later developed a system of "noble counties," which subsequently became an all-important institution in the defense of Hungarian national rights as well.

While the wave of castle-building in the thirteenth century helped to elevate the wealthy barons to a position of unusual power and influence

within Hungary, this same process also served as a bulwark to the development of lasting autonomous provinces in the country. Unlike in such Western countries as France or Spain, in Hungary the provincial barons (oligarchs) "emerged victoriously only from the struggle of every feudal lord against every other feudal lord" (p. 67). This was so because neither the powerful provincial lords, nor those who struggled against them were able to think in any other way, except in terms of "large estates," each of which was centered on a particular castle. Each castle and each estate constituted a separate entity, and thus the "province" of even the most powerful of these barons was nothing more than simply a chain of estates, with no signs of real centralization. They were linked together only by the force that the baron represented. This recognition on the part of Fügedi is very significant, and it applies equally to all of the great Hungarian feudal lords of that chaotic period, including Matthew Csák, the greatest of them all, who at one time may have held as many as fifty castles.

Following their rise to the Hungarian throne, the Anjous gradually broke the power of all of these feudal lords and re-established centralization in the country. Moreover, having learned from the experiences of the immediate past, they very seldom permitted a lord to hold more than a single castle. There were, of course, a few exceptions, such as the Újlaki, the Lackfi, the Wolfart, the Drágfi, the Szecskői-Herceg and the Jolsvai families, who held between two to four castles each. But even in these instances, the castles held by a single family were at a great distance from one another, which prevented the likelihood of the emergence of new "provinces" to rival the centralized powers of the monarchs.

The Anjous were also responsible for the development of the offices of the *castellanus* (commander) and *vice-castellanus* (deputy commander) for their castles. The holders of these offices had military, economic, administrative, as well as judicial functions. Later the office of the castellan was often merged with the office of the *ispán* or *comes*, who was the chief administrative officer of the new "noble county." Moreover, in a number of instances, these offices became hereditary in a specific local family.

To prevent the decline of their recently strengthened monarchical powers, the Anjous also made certain that the majority of the most important castles would revert to and remain in royal hands. This policy soon bore fruit. Whereas in 1300 less than one-fifth of the Hungarian castles were held by the monarchs, at the time of King Louis's death in 1382, over half of all castles were royal fortresses.

The Hungarian castles built or rebuilt during the Anjou period were far ahead of those of the late Árpád period also in the area of architectural technology. Thus, in addition to being built only from stone (some late Árpádian castles still had some perishable materials), the Anjou castles also became more complex structurally. In addition to the *donjon,* generally called the "old tower," now a second tower — usually a gate tower — was also added. In a number of instances we also encounter a "palace" that served as the quarters of the lord and of his family, as well as a chapel or a church. Thus, fourteenth-century Hungarian castles had developed into multifunctional fortresses, even though the use of gunpowder and explosive weapons — that would require additional structural developments — had not as yet come into general use in Hungary. But by that time the castle ceased to be simply a defensive fortress as it used to be during the first century and a half of its existence. It also became the center of the baronial estate, and of the baron's feudal administrative and jurisdictional powers over the peasants who were moving in the direction of becoming bonded serfs.

Fügedi's introductory essay is a very useful summary of the social, economic and political impact of castle-building in thirteenth and fourteenth-century Hungary. Yet, at least of equal importance is his lengthy appendix that contains the relevant data of the 330 castles he was able to locate. Here Fügedi was searching for answers to the following six basic questions with respect to each of the castles: 1. Who built it? 2. When was it built? 3. What was its strategic importance? 4. Who and during which time period were its commanders in the fourteenth century? 5. What was its history like during the same period? 6. What are its architectural data? In light of the scarcity of sources, naturally it was impossible for the author to answer all of these questions for all of the castles. But even with the unavoidable omissions, Fügedi's work is still a treasurehouse of information on medieval Hungarian social and fortification history. The usefulness of his data is further increased by the two appended maps that pinpoint the location of the castles built before 1270 and 1300 respectively. His bibliography is also useful. But one would wish that the book also contain a name and subject index. The lack of such an index makes its use more difficult; and this, in my view, ought to be corrected in a future edition. This is all the more desirable if — as rumored — Fügedi's work will also appear in Western languages.

Erik Fügedi, who has published a number of significant works since 1939,[3] has again done a great service to Hungarian historical scholarship. His research on medieval Hungarian fortifications has filled a considerable void. We hope that he will continue his research, and

eventually will also produce a similar study on the development of Hungarian fortifications during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. With such a sequence to his present work, he would contribute much to our understanding of Hungarian social history of that period.

As opposed to Fügedi's monograph, the multi-authored *Fabling Hungarian Castles* is not, nor does it purport to be a scholarly work. Rather, it is a popular compendium of twenty-seven individual essays, one of which introduces the work, while the other twenty-six deal with the history and architecture of as many Hungarian castles. The introductory essay by László Gerő, the "dean" of Hungarian fortification scholars, is an excellent summary that discusses the history of Hungarian castle-building and fortification technology right up to the end of the sixteenth century, and does so with ample number of illustrations for the general reader to follow the technical aspects of these developments. Gerő, however, could not as yet incorporate into his study some of Fügedi's conclusions, and consequently he still regards the Mongol conquest as the starting point for the new type of stone fortresses in Hungary.

While Gerő's introductory study goes only up to the end of the sixteenth century, the essays on the individual castles carry their history right up to the present. But in addition to narrating the history of each of the castles, the authors also make an effort to reconstruct the castles as they were during the heyday of their history; and do so with the use of floor plans, sketches, as well as photographs.

Although many of the twenty-six castles discussed belong or at one time were among the largest and most important fortifications in Hungary (e.g. Buda, Diósgyőr, Eger, Esztergom, Győr, Gyula, Kőszeg, Sárospatak, Siklós, Szeged, Székesfehérvár, Szigetvár, Vác, Várpalota, Veszprém), this does not apply to all of them (e.g. Csesznek, Egervár [Zala county], Hollókő, Kisnána, Nagyvázsony, Sárvár, Sümeg, Szerencs, Szigliget, Tata, Visegrád). Moreover, numerous others of equal or almost equal importance were left out simply because they are not located within present-day Hungary (i.e. those in Czechoslovakia [Slovakia], Roumania [Transylvania], Austria [Burgenland], Yugoslavia [mostly Croatia-Slavonia], and the Soviet Union [Carpatho-Ruthenia]). Although indefensible from a historical point of view, the editor and the authors justified their selection on the basis of the purposes of the book, which was intended to serve as a guide to those castles that are readily accessible to their readers.

As each of the essays was originally written to be broadcast on radio, the authors used easy-flowing styles, and they also sprinkled their

essays with quotations both from contemporary sources, as well as from later poetical works. This makes for easy and enjoyable reading. Moreover, because the authors are all recognized authorities in their fields, the book can be useful reading even to historians. This also holds true for the bibliography, which lists some of the better and more accessible works both on fortification research in general, as well as on each of the castles discussed.

The *Fabling Hungarian Castles* is a beautifully printed and amply illustrated work, but like Fügedi's volume, it too lacks an index. In this case, however, this omission has less significance.

NOTES

1. Czobor Béla, "Magyarország középkori várai," *Századok* 11(1877): 602-641, which also appeared as a separate publication in 1878. See also Csaba Csorba, "A magyarországi várkutatás története," *A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia II. Osztályának Közleményei* 23 (1974): 296-310.
2. See for example: László Gerő, *Magyarországi várépítészet* (Budapest, 1955); idem, *Magyar várak* (Budapest, 1968); *Várépítészetünk*, ed. László Gerő (Budapest, 1975); and László Gerő, *Történelmi városmagok* (Budapest, 1978).
3. Erik Fügedi's main works include: *Nyitra megye betelepülése* (Budapest, 1939); *A 15. századi magyar arisztokrácia mobilitása* (Budapest, 1970); *Uram, királyom . . . A XV. századi Magyarország hatalmasai* (Budapest, 1974); and the work under review.

The Hungarian Revolution of 1848

Laszlo Deme

The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848–1849. By Istvan Deak. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979. xxi, 415 pp.

The 1848 revolution is the central event in modern Hungarian history. More has been written about the various aspects of the revolutionary years than about any other period in the long history of the Magyars. For a short while Hungary was in the mainstream of European developments and her struggle for freedom and independence from Austria was met by an enthusiastic response among contemporary progressives abroad and liberal Western historians ever since. In the Hungarian collective consciousness the revolution and the War of Independence became sacred. The leaders, above all Lajos Kossuth, are considered national heroes, and will be probably forever in the spiritual Pantheon of the Magyars.

The exalted place of 1848 in Hungarian history appears justified because through the liberation of the serfs the immense majority gained significant new freedoms, and because the national cause inspired truly extraordinary human effort and sacrifice. But the generally positive attitude of most historians has tended to justify rather than explain and critically analyze the events which took place in Hungary during the revolution. Mihály Horváth, Hungary's outstanding nineteenth-century historian, began this trend and through his monumental works a romantic-heroic view of 1848–49 was firmly established. After 1945, Marxist historians in Hungary gave greater emphasis to economic factors, the conditions of the peasantry were more thoroughly examined, and the radical left was given more attention. Thus, the traditional picture became somewhat more complex. But recent Hungarian historians also tend to emphasize primarily the positive aspects of 1848, as did their pre-

1945 predecessors. Mistakes in the treatment of the non-Magyar nationalities are now frankly admitted, but other political errors or blunders of the Hungarian leadership are usually underplayed and passed over in a few sentences. In short, the treatment of the revolution in many ways remained essentially romantic down to our own times. In essence, this view changed relatively little in a century.

There are certain obvious advantages to treating a great romantic revolution in a romantic fashion. But for our own age other modes of explanation appear to be more meaningful. Istvan Deak brings a new and different approach to the study of 1848. In his new book, *The Lawful Revolution, Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848–1849,* he consistently applies the critical-analytical method to the Magyars and their adversaries and to different political groups among the Hungarian revolutionaries. The result is not a romantic but a realistic and critical account interpreting political developments and the actions of participants objectively and with sophistication.

The author characterizes his work as "a political history with brief excursions into social and institutional history" (p. xviii). His book is a combination of a detailed biography of Kossuth during the most important two years of his life and a systematic scholarly account of the Hungarian revolution. Such an approach gives primacy to the human element in the historical process. Consequently, Deak's book is interesting and exciting and will certainly hold the reader's attention.

In the introductory chapter, Deak presents the Vormärz in Hungary and acquaints us with the political institutions, parliamentary politics, and most important political figures of the Reform Period. We also follow Kossuth's career from the modest position of a country lawyer in northern Hungary to that of a nationally known leader of the liberal opposition and Pest county's representative at the 1847–48 session of the Diet. Kossuth's leadership role in the Diet in March and April is well documented and the new constitutional setup created by the April Laws is thoroughly described. The historic significance of the reform in the spring is considered to be that "it guaranteed the economic and political survival of the landowning class; it opened the way to spectacular economic and cultural development; and it provided the Magyar nation with an eternal romantic legacy" (p. 106).

The months between April and August 1848 are regarded as a period "between legality and rebellion." The author deals with the negative reaction of the non-Magyar nationalities of Hungary to the April Laws and shows the beginning of the civil war. Deak correctly points out that the Court and the Austrian Cabinet cooperated with the Hungarian

Government in the spring and early summer and sees weakness, desire to gain time before a counter-offensive, and sincere good intention as the combined motivation for this cooperation. The coming of the conflict between Austria and Hungary is also explained on the basis of a combination of factors, but Deak believes that the primary cause was the April Constitution itself: "Two foreign services, two armies, and two fiscal administrations were simply too much for a European great power" (p. 133).

The mistakes of the Hungarian side are clearly pointed out, for instance, Hungary's refusal to shoulder one-fourth of the Imperial State debt is regarded as "politically and morally indefensible" (p. 134). But it is also stated that in June 1848 not the Hungarians but the Croats acted revolutionary when the Zagreb Assembly declared readiness to secede from Hungary and join Austria. The situation is presented though, not primarily in terms of right or wrong, but as it truly was, confusion. The confusion was caused by conflicting loyalties, contradictory orders, and a complete lack of clear lines of authority. Above all, it was due to the fact that to obey the Austrian Emperor in Hungary was treason and directly contrary to orders issued in the name of the King of Hungary. Both Majesties being the same person, Ferdinand, the situation indeed left the loyal subject with the idea that no matter what one did, one was bound to violate His Majesty's laws "by the very act of obeying them" (p. 141).

After surveying the work of the First Representative Assembly during the summer, Professor Deak correctly regards the "month of defiance," September, a turning point and notes that after Jelačić's attack, Hungary was a constitutional monarchy in name only. In reality it had become a parliamentary dictatorship. To the author, the responsibility for the conflict seems to be a divided one. He considers the Austrian accusation about a planned invasion of Croatia by the Hungarians nonsense, but also points out that the Hungarians had forced the Court into excessive concessions in March, and they should have been more accommodating on such matters of common concern as military and financial affairs. Contrary to most Hungarian historians, Deak does not consider the appointment, at the end of September, of Count Ferenc Lamberg as royal commissioner and commander-in-chief of all armed forces in Hungary a counter-revolutionary act. Lamberg's appointment is seen in the interest of peace and autonomy of Hungary, and it is considered to be the last effort to save the Monarchy in its old decentralized form.

After "September Days," the author describes the opposing armies

and, using the latest research available, gives a detailed and thorough account of the military potential of both sides. Apart from regiments, armaments and equipment, we learn such rather astonishing facts that the officer corps of the Hungarian revolutionary army had a larger proportion of nobles than the Imperial side, which prompts Professor Deak to say that "it is an apt commentary on the 'gentlemanly' character of the Hungarian revolution that its army was less open to talent than the Habsburg army" (p. 197).

The fall offensive of Prince Windisch-Graetz against Hungary, the evacuation of Budapest, and the Hungarian parliament's move to Debrecen are well outlined. Although the months of "near-disaster" and those of the "recovery and ecstasy" are described in terms of Kossuth's dictatorship, in examining the events of the winter and the spring Deak presents the vast panorama of the war and often diverts attention from Kossuth. He explains political and military motives of various army leaders, different political groups, and early attempts to arrive at some accommodation with the Austrians. The main course of the victorious spring offensive is clearly presented. Following traditional interpretation, Deak considers it to be the worst military mistake of the Hungarians that, instead of pursuing the retreating Austrian army to the frontier or beyond, they turned to the siege and capture of the castle hill at Buda. He believes, however, that the fate of the Hungarians had been sealed already by the defeat of the Vienna October revolution, and after that they fought "only a costly delaying action" (p. 184).

The author's contention that Austria would not have needed Russian help to defeat the Magyars seems justified from a military point of view. He argues that the new Austrian commander Haynau rejuvenated the Austrian army. He fought a dozen important engagements against the Magyars and did not lose any of them. Thus, ultimately "it was the Austrians, and not the Russians, who put an end to the Hungarian War of Independence" (p. 302). The Russian army in Hungary is presented as "a witless but benevolent giant" which "inflicted only limited harm on its opponents and in turn suffered little harm from the Hungarians" (p. 305).

Although the facts as presented above are undoubtedly correct, it appears to this writer that a large invading foreign army cannot be regarded as benevolent under any circumstances, and that the harmful effect of the Russian intervention is generally underestimated. It certainly is true that the Austrians fought the major battles. But Professor Deak himself teaches us the importance of the fact that the peasant masses did not answer Kossuth's appeals against the Russians in June

because submission to the enemy seemed to offer more protection than armed resistance (p. 293). He also properly calls attention to the fact that by early August there no longer was a Hungarian national will to go on fighting (pp. 318-320). It does not seem very likely that without the Russian intervention the Hungarian national will to continue with the war would have disappeared so rapidly. After all, the Hungarian forces numbered about 170,000 against an Austrian army of ca. 175,000, and the Magyars had certainly proved a few weeks earlier that the Austrians were by no means invincible. The sudden loss of confidence and a change in the national psyche seems very much connected with the appearance of the "Russian colossus," an army of 200,000 backed by the vast resources of the enormous Russian Empire. The Russian forces may not have inflicted much actual damage on the Hungarians, but their presence must have been the deciding psychological factor for unconditional surrender.

After describing the capitulation of the Hungarians, Professor Deak surveys Austrian retribution and briefly outlines Kossuth's career in exile in the epilogue. There is no separate chapter at the end of the study for the author's conclusions. But since description and analysis are combined throughout the entire work, the reader is certainly not left in the dark about the author's views on the major issues and the most important participants.

Among the *dramatis personae* in Deak's book there are no complete villains or faultless heroes, and he avoids seeing things in black and white. It is noted even about Metternich that in the spring of 1848 there was no fundamental difference between Kossuth's and Metternich's socio-economic programs for Hungary (p. 105). Contrary to most Hungarian historians, Palatine Archduke Stephen is regarded not as a traitor to Hungary or to anyone else, but is simply presented as an "embattled leader trying to mediate between two hostile camps" (p. 92). Similarly, Deak stresses the conservative features of the Windisch-Graetz regime set up after the occupation of Budapest, but also describes its essential moderation and respect for the territorial integrity of Hungary.

In terms of personalities the period before 1848 is symbolized by the rivalry between István Széchenyi and Kossuth and the history of the War of Independence by the competition between General Arthur Görgey and Kossuth. Although Széchenyi is dealt with rather briefly, the author regards him as Kossuth's "much greater contemporary" (p. 62). On the other hand, while Görgey is considered to be modern Hungary's greatest military genius, of the two Kossuth was undoubtedly the greater

figure, according to Deak (p. 183). Görgey's military talent and leadership qualities are clearly recognized, and he, too, is considered to be a Magyar patriot. Unlike Kossuth, however, Görgey fought for the more limited aims of securing the April Laws and maintaining a dignified place for Hungary within the Habsburg Monarchy. The author's sympathies are obviously with Görgey when on January 1 Kossuth ordered him to fight a decisive battle near Budapest, but "without endangering the safety of the army." Deak goes on to point out, however, that after the victorious spring offensive, Görgey's behavior became incomprehensible. He, who had always seemed to hope for some kind of reconciliation with the ruling house, now openly denounced the "perfidious dynasty" and talked about the "funeral ceremony of the House of Austria." One is indeed inclined to agree with Deak's evaluation, giving Görgey credit for his military talent, but considering him a confused amateur in the art of politics. Kossuth's final charge of treason against Görgey and his attempt to place the blame on the General for the defeat Deak sees as a calculated move "to find a scapegoat to provide the nation with the traitor its broken pride so badly needed" (p. 322). The available evidence supports this opinion.

The most interesting and challenging aspect of *The Lawful Revolution* is the presentation and assessment of Kossuth's role. The author is more critical of Kossuth than most other Hungarian historians have been. The tone is set in the introduction. The author states that the principal actor of the drama of 1848 was Kossuth, and refers to his organizational abilities and towering personality. But he adds:

> In him, Hungarians recognize their spokesman and their hero, but also the symbol of much that they see as calamitous in the national character: pomposity, excessive pride, a penchant for theatrical gestures, naivite, and easy enthusiasm. (p. xiv)

Indeed, *The Lawful Revolution* provides ample evidence for both the positive and negative features attributed to Kossuth. A systematic presentation of the March Days shows Kossuth's immense parliamentary victories and his success and great popularity even in Vienna. Later, we see him time and time again as an extraordinarily successful orator able to influence deputies in the parliament and induce masses of peasants to take up arms for the defense of the country. Similarly, Deak shows and demonstrates Kossuth's assiduity in crisis situations. He points out, for instance, that between September 1 and 15 Kossuth made sixteen parliamentary speeches, drafted at least thirteen decrees and five other lengthy communications, and wrote several newspaper articles. But in other contexts Deak rejects Kossuth's boast that had he wanted to he

could have put an end to the Habsburg role in Vienna on March 15. Similarly, Deak does not quite believe Kossuth's claim that he would rather have been "a dog than a minister or prime minister" (p. 205). He makes repeated references to Kossuth's lack of physical courage and considers him "energetic but somewhat weak and irresolute" (p. 225). He even calls attention to Kossuth's opportunism and to the fact that he often declined to shoulder responsibility for his decisions (p. 254).

Thus, admiration for Kossuth's great accomplishments is mixed with some criticism. Should the book be translated into Hungarian, no doubt it would create quite a stir among Budapest intellectuals. It is based on a very thorough mastery of both primary and secondary sources and on substantial archival research. Its greatest value is in the brilliantly incisive application of the critical-analytical method. Deak also has obvious literary ability, and tells an interesting story vividly and elegantly. His *Lawful Revolution* will remain the best single-volume study on the Hungarians in 1848 for a long time to come.

Recent Writings on Hungarian Historiography by S. B. Várdy

Thomas Szendrey

Hungarian Historiography and the Geistesgeschichte School — A magyar történettudomány és a szellemtörténeti iskola. Cleveland: An Árpád Academy Publication, 1974. 96 pp.

Modern Hungarian Historiography. Boulder, Colorado: East European Quarterly (distributed by Columbia University Press), 1976. 333 pp.

A concern with the history of historical scholarship, or the self-examination of the development of a profession, is invariably undertaken as a constantly practiced sideline by some historians, but only a very few write historiographical accounts and even fewer concern themselves with the methodological, ideological, and philosophical dimensions of historical scholarship.

Hungarian historiography has been hardly written about since the professionalization of scholarship in this discipline has been institutionalized, in the modern sense, during approximately the past two centuries. This is not meant to state that there was no history written earlier; there quite obviously was, as even the cursory but compact introductory chapters of Várdy's book, *Modern Hungarian Historiography,* describe. There was, however, no institutionally based historical profession, until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries generally, and the mid-nineteenth century in Hungary. Indeed, the organization of the Hungarian Historical Society dates back to 1867, although support for the historical profession was provided by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences through a commission for the study of the past in 1854.[1]

The history of the development of historical studies in Hungary has not been extensively written about and the books under review comprise one of the best major efforts yet undertaken to provide an account of this development. There are a few other books and studies in Hungarian and German which deal with some aspects of the subject, but no other

sound and scholarly comprehensive accounts.[2] There is the book written by Alexander Flegler,[3] a friend of the nineteenth century Hungarian historian László Szalay, a few sketchy studies in periodicals and general books dealing with historiographical developments[4] and a doctoral dissertation by this reviewer,[5] which, however, deals more with ideological and methodological concerns and is not strictly a historiographical study. Hence, the publication of these two books fulfills one of the long neglected needs of Hungarian historiography and one can only hope that Várdy as well as others will continue to broaden and especially deepen our understanding of the development of Hungarian historiography, important not only for the understanding of a historiographical heritage hitherto mostly neglected, but also because an understand ing of this particular branch of scholarly activity opens up new vistas in the study of Hungarian intellectual, cultural, and literary life as well. Furthermore, these studies can also contribute to an enhanced comparative understanding of the development of European historiography.[6]

The brief dual language book, *Hungarian Historiography and the Geistesgeschichte School — A magyar történettudomány és a szellemtörténeti iskola*[7] anticipates, in somewhat abbreviated form, the ideas and conclusions presented in the other, lengthier and more substantial, treatment of the same and other topics. Hence, those who wish to read a briefer treatment of some of the major trends in twentieth century Hungarian historiography, especially those who read Hungarian only, will be well served by this briefer version. However, the specialist, and those interested in following the argument more closely and obtaining a more comprehensive account, must definitely read the longer version presented in the other book.[8] Since the argument and basic philosophical orientation in the two books under consideration is sufficiently identical, the substantive discussion in this review will generally be based on the lengthier version.

A few observations concerning the basic thesis of both books should be briefly stated before considering the structure, orientation, and content of these works. It is Várdy's thesis that the widely held belief that the *Geistesgeschichte* orientation was the only viable one in interwar Hungarian historiography should be modified. In his words: "This study deals basically with the nature of inter-war Hungarian historiography. Its basic thesis is that — contrary to the generally accepted belief by inter-war and more recent historians — the so-called *Geistesgeschichte* (Szellemtörténet) School, while undoubtedly the most important one, was not the only worthwhile orientation or school in the historiography

of inter-war Hungary."[9] While accepting this judgment in its essentials and also understanding the fact that there were numerous other historical schools operative in Hungarian historical scholarship in interwar Hungary, there is another sense in which the idealistic philosophical foundation characteristic of the *Geistesgeschichte* orientation was shared, in some way — often misunderstood, invariably misinterpreted, and insufficiently appreciated — by the numerous strata comprising Hungarian historians and the educated reading public. Virtually all of the other orientations discussed in these books had in common, if nothing else, an anti-materialist conception of history; thus, an insignificant number of Marxists notwithstanding, a dominance of some form of philosophical idealism, of an essentially eclectic character and irrespective of how well understood or how greatly misunderstood, characterized interwar Hungarian intellectual and cultural life generally. It should be added that there was no official imposition of the *Geistesgeschichte* orientation; indeed Várdy's discussion of the numerous schools of thought only underscores this often neglected and misunderstood characteristic of interwar Hungary. Thus, Várdy is quite correct when he states that there were numerous other historical schools influencing Hungarian historical scholarship, but I believe that he neglects to emphasize adequately that the philosophical influences which gave birth to the *Geistesgeschichte* orientation in Hungarian historical scholarship were more pervasive than his argument would indicate.

In order to fully appreciate the pervasiveness of the *Geistesgeschichte* orientation in Hungarian thought, including naturally historical thought in the first half of our century, it is necessary to conceive of this orientation as a multi-faceted, complex, essentially idealistic (in both the epistemological sense and the sense that ideas were to be considered as the motive force of history and historical change), and an obviously anti-materialistic conception of history. Even those who polemicized with Szekfű and some of the other major figures in the formulation and propagation of the Hungarian *Geistesgeschichte* orientation, with very few exceptions, stayed within the confines of an essentially idealistic frame of reference.[10] An anti-materialist philosophy of history was undoubtedly dominant, but it existed not as a monolithic and superimposed ideology, but as a widely held and accepted pattern of thought and sentiment in many diverse forms and manifestations. Although other, mostly non-idealistic patterns of thought (Marxist, positivist, existentialist, etc.) also exercised a limited impact in Hungarian intellectual circles, these were by no means widespread. In sum, it can be

argued that many of the opponents of the *Geistesgeschichte* orientation were opposed only to certain manifestations of it and not to the dominant idealistic orientation of interwar Hungarian intellectual life.

Thus, there are at least two other observations which must be made about the philosophical dimension of Várdy's account of Hungarian historical scholarship. Despite the excellent organization of the work, a feature much praised by some of the reviewers,[11] and the relative completeness of his account of Hungarian historiography — based furthermore upon solid and painstaking research to which all future scholars will be indebted for quite some time — the discussion of the principles and development of the *Geistesgeschichte* orientation in historical thought is quite sketchy, especially when the determination of the character of this school of thought is related to the major theme. This brevity of philosophical discussion characterizes not only his account of the origin of this school in mostly, but by no means exclusively, German philosophic thought concerning the nature of historical knowledge and the methodological concerns of the human sciences more generally; the discussion of the Hungarian philosophers and thinkers instrumental in preparing the mental climate for this orientation, which was to influence so fundamentally Hungarian historiography, is also quite brief and limited to more or less a listing of some of the pertinent individuals and some of their works. His numerous and informative, quite often perceptive and trenchant, comments about historians and their works, so valuable a feature of much of the book, are not to be found to the same extent when he is discussing philosophers and their writings.

Second, another feature of his works which this reviewer wishes to cast a critical glance at, is the characterization of the *Geistesgeschichte* orientation and the philosophy of Dilthey and other thinkers of that orientation as irrational.[12] Indeed, this is the major criticism I wish to make of the otherwise commendable and very useful two books.

Other than the fact that the *Geistesgeschichte* orientation should more properly be termed as anti-positivist, anti-materialist, and generally as post-rationalistic in the sense of being opposed to the Enlightenment conception of rationalism, Várdy's discussion of this orientation obviously suffers from his characterization of the *Geistesgeschichte* orientation as irrational, augmented furthermore by at least one attempt to link idealism and irrationalism.[13] In all likelihood, this characterization of this orientation as irrational may have its origin in a similar judgment concerning the *Geistesgeschichte* school as irrational by György Lukács, the eminent Hungarian Marxist philosopher, whose ideas con-

cerning this orientation have a wide circulation in philosophical circles, so wide that sometimes this judgment is accepted without specific reference to the source in the writings of Lukács.[14] It is for these reasons that subsequent work in the field of Hungarian historiography and Hungarian intellectual history generally, will have to come to terms with the philosophical dimension and certain related issues, specifically the epistemological problem of historical knowledge and the numerous significant concerns centering on the meaning of the human experience (the speculative philosophy of history), in order to obtain an understanding not only of the development of the tradition of Hungarian historiography, but also the motivations which shaped it and the ideas which inspired it. However, the discussion of these issues was not the theme the author of these books chose to develop, hence he cannot be faulted for not doing so. Nonetheless, these observations are intended to broaden those vistas which Várdy's books have opened for the reader concerned with these subjects.

It is an often stated truism that reviewers sometimes review the books they have not yet written and this reviewer's case is no exception to that generalization. However, an attempt to explain the philosophical and methodological aspects and concerns of Hungarian historical scholarship in its intellectual and cultural setting could not be undertaken until this extremely well structured and organized, pertinently and exhaustively documented, and pioneering work had been completed.

Turning attention to the structure and content of the book, it should be stated again that one of the major accomplishments of Várdy was to have provided an organizational schema, in itself an act of historical synthesis, to make the discussion of a myriad of orientations and individuals, comprehensible and structured. There can be little doubt that after a careful reading of these books one will have a good working knowledge of the Hungarian tradition of historical scholarship, augmented by an even more comprehensive understanding of two individuals whom Várdy has chosen, most properly one might add, to emphasize, namely Gyula Szekfű, whom he considers as the dominant influence in the development of the *Geistesgeschichte* orientation, and Elemér Mályusz, the developer of the ethnohistory school and an outstanding historian of social and institutional structures. His account of Szekfű is based upon a very comprehensive collection of works by and about him, whereas the account of the career and works of Mályusz, is based also upon numerous personal interviews and an extensive correspondence. Várdy's numerous and extended opportunities to work in

Hungarian libraries, archives, and institutes, coupled with personal contact with a number of Hungarian historians, further enhances the source value of some parts of his book.[15]

Generally, most Hungarian historians and their works are at least mentioned, although one would have hoped for a slightly less diffused discussion of the other major figures; quite often one must turn to the index to find numerous scattered comments about individuals such as Bálint Hóman, Péter Váczy, Sándor Domanovszky, as well as numerous others. Although most themes and concerns of Hungarian historical scholarship are covered, some even in separate chapters — specifically East European studies, world history, legal and constitutional history, auxiliary and allied sciences — there are other fields, such as the philosophy of history and church history, both Catholic and Protestant, which at least in the judgment of this reviewer, could have been discussed in a less diffused manner in the first instance and more completely in the second instance.

These critical comments and observations notwithstanding, Várdy's contribution to our understanding of the Hungarian historiographical tradition should prove to be fundamental and no one who proposes to work in this field can afford to neglect his efforts. This well researched and detailed account of the history of Hungarian historical scholarship in the twentieth century (prefaced by a few brief background chapters concerning earlier developments) serves as a very useful introduction and guide to the labyrinth of Hungarian historiography. It is undoubtedly a work of fundamental importance.

NOTES

1. Concerning the establishment of the Hungarian Historical Society see Imre Lukinich, *A Magyar Történelmi Társulat története, 1867-1917* (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1918), esp. pp. 15-24.
2. Most of these other studies and books are cited by Várdy in his very extensive bibliographies, see *Modern Hungarian Historiography*, pp. 289-297, especially the works of Hóman, Léderer, and Lékai.
3. Alexander Flegler, *A magyar történetírás történelme* (Budapest: Franklin, 1877). The book was originally published in German.
4. The sections, in most instances only a few pages, dealing with Hungarian historiography in these major accounts of historiography are very sketchy and inevitably misleading. Hopefully, publications, such as Várdy's books, will provide the information which will make subsequent general accounts of historiography more accurate and complete when dealing with Hungary. Among those major accounts which have generally insufficient and very incomplete

information about Hungarian historiographical developments include, but are by no means limited, to the following: Harry Elmer Barnes, *History of Historical Writing*, 2nd. rev. ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1962); Eduard Fueter, *Geschichte der Neueren Historiographie* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1925); George P. Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959); and James Thompson, *A History of Historical Writing*, 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1942).

5. Thomas Szendrey, *The Ideological and Methodological Foundations of Hungarian Historiography, 1750–1970* (Ph.D. diss., Jamaica, N.Y.: St. John's University, 1972).
6. Other books which have contributed to an enhanced understanding of European historiography by presenting a national historiographical tradition include Georg G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History, The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present* (Middletown, Conn., Wesleyan University Press, 1968); Konstantin F. Shteppa, *Russian Historians and the Soviet State* (New Brunsick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1962); and Bert James Loewenberg, *American History in American Thought* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972).
7. The discussion of this book is based upon the English version.
8. *Modern Hungarian Historiography* (Boulder, Colo.: East European Quarterly, 1976).
9. *Hungarian Historiography and the Geistesgeschichte School*, p. 59.
10. *Modern Hungarian Historiography*, p. 247, chap. 12, fn. 3, citing a letter from Mályusz to Várdy, March 30, 1975. Mályusz writes: "I did not turn against *Geistesgeschichte*, only against Szekfű's and Hóman's interpretation and use of the same — being as they were guided by ulterior motives, the desire for success [and] in search of cheap glories." Furthermore, this reviewer recalls a conversation with Mályusz, held at the Várdy residence during their IREX tenure in Budapest in May 1970, during which Mályusz stated that his historical orientation had indeed been idealistic in nature.
11. Most of the reviews I have seen have mentioned the excellent organization of *Modern Hungarian Historiography*, including the reviews published in Hungary, especially one by Emil Niederhauser in *Századok* 111 (1977): 826–827.
12. The term irrational is used any number of times and was objected to by other reviewers, specifically Lee Congdon in his brief review published in *History — Review of New Books*, January 1977, p. 77.
13. This is most evident in a discussion of the activities of Sándor Domanovszky, where he writes as follows: "In other words, while trying to dethrone or at least lessen the influence of the *Geistesgeschichte* School, Domanovszky himself attacked the philosophical foundations of the positivist system he represented. Thus, *while generally opposing idealism and irrationalism*, (emphasis added) at this time Domanovszky appeared to speak up for an *idealist and irrational* (emphasis added) interpretation of history, placing himself dangerously close to the position of the *Geistesgeschichte* historians." *Modern Hungarian Historiography*, p. 169.
14. With the exception of one book by György Lukács, *Magyar irodalom — magyar kultúra* (Budapest, 1970), listed in the bibliography, there are no other references to the works of Lukács, even though he dealt extensively with the

philosophy of Dilthey and related subjects in his book, *Az ész trónfosztása* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1965) and numerous other books and essays. Furthermore, a selection from the works of Dilthey was published in Hungarian; Wilhelm Dilthey, *A történelmi világ felépítése a szellemtudományokban* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1974).

15. See the preface to *Modern Hungarian Historiography*, pp. xiii-ix.

BOOK REVIEWS

Modern polgári jogelméleti tanulmányok [Studies in Modern Bourgeois Legal Theory]. Edited by Csaba Varga and András Sajó. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1977. 145 pp.

This small volume, published under the auspices of the Institute of State and Legal Sciences [Állam és Jogtudományi Intézet], is a series of translations of studies in twentieth-century legal theory. All of the writers are celebrated representatives of non-socialist legal scholarship: Hans Kelsen, Rudolf Stammler, Bódog Somló, Eugen Ehrlich, Jerome Frank, Axel Hagerstrom, A. Vilhelm Lundstedt and Gustav Radbruch. Outstanding as these legal theoreticians are, the inclusion of their contributions was not intended to provide a complete sample of twentieth-century legal theories, but the editors claim that they do represent the most important trends in "contemporary bourgeois scholarship."

The volume opens with Hans Kelsen, the most distinguished positivist of the twentieth century. The section from Kelsen's *The Law as a Specific Legal Technique* (1941), includes the seminal theses of his theory, analyzing the law as a particular societal technique. Law is viewed as an enforced order based on the application of sanctions. The evolution of the legal technique is a history of the differentiation of the system of sanctions; a higher system of law is based on centralization as against the decentralized nature of primitive law. The presented material includes the core of Kelsen's pure theory of law. He argues that no theory of justice can form part of a pure theory of law. Ideals of justice must be a matter of political science, while the pure theory of law must be uncontaminated by politics, ethics, sociology and history. Its task is knowledge of all that is essential to law, it is a quest for pure knowledge. Kelsen does not extend a theory of law to what the law *ought* to be; that is the task of political science, or of ethics, or of religion.

From the neo-Kantian school, Rudolf Stammler's legal philosophy is presented. The selections are based on his *Theorie der Rechtswissenschaft* (1911) and focus on the form and substance of the legal thought, the concept and meaning of law and the distinctions between written and effective law.

The Hungarian Bódog Somló represents the analytical legal positivism (*Juristische Grundlehre*, 1917). He was among the first continental jurists who studied John Austin thoroughly, but reduced Austin's six necessary notions to four: right, duty, sovereignty and state. All these are logically presupposed by the idea of legal order. In the translated parts Somló deals with the meanings of the concept of law, the lawmaking power, the multiple meaning of the word "law" and the consequences of its different interpretations.

The exponent of the modern sociological school is Eugen Ehrlich's *Grundlegung der Sociologie des Rechts* (1913). His main thesis is that the crucial aspect of the legal development lies not in legislation, nor in juristic science, nor in judicial decision, but in society itself. The "living law" that actually lives in society is in permanent evolution, always outpacing the rigid and immobile state law.

From the perspective of Marxism-Leninism, probably the most disagreeable scholar in the collection is the American Jerome Frank who probes into the fundamental myth of law (*Law and the Modern Mind*, 1930). In tracing the historical roots of this problem, he explores the causes: desire for stability in the society contradicts the relative nature of law and of the legal cases. Frank analyses the law from the psychoanalytical point of view: he likens the desire for (legal) certainty to the infant's craving for infallible authority (father complex).

The volume continues with two outstanding exponents of the Scandinavian realists: Axel Hagerstrom (*On Fundamental Problems of Law*, 1930) and A. Vilhelm Lundstedt (*Legal Thinking Revisited*, 1956). Scandinavian realism is essentially a philosophical critique of the metaphysical foundations of law. Hagerstrom totally rejects the natural law philosophy and any absolute ideas of justice. Lundstedt analyses the contemporary legal sciences as well as outlines his concept of the "constructive legal science." For him, law is nothing but the very life of mankind in organized groups and the conditions which make possible "peaceful coexistence" of masses of individuals and social groups; law is determined by "social welfare." This formulation does not differ greatly from the objectives of legal order as outlined by Soviet jurists.

The last piece in the collection is by Gustav Radbruch, a distinguished exponent of relativist legal philosophy. In his *Gesetliches Unrecht und Übergesetzliche Recht* (1946), he analyzes the questions of "lawful illegality" and "lawless law." Based on the bitter experiences of national socialist jurisprudence, Radbruch suggests that where the violation of justice reaches an intolerable degree ("lawless law"), the law has no claim to obedience.

This reviewer concurs with the editors' statement that there are no discernible ideological reasons for the selection of the translated pieces. Nevertheless there is some cohesion between the chosen themes of the respective jurists: they all address themselves to fundamental questions of legal theory, i.e., the nature and origin of law, the sociological, psychological and philosophical foundations of legal institutions, as well as some important controversial issues of contemporary legal thought. Careful effort was made in selecting from each writer the vital substance of their respective theories.

While most major modern trends are represented by a renowned scholar, some other schools of thought have been altogether omitted. The new legal idealism, François Geny and the German 'Interessenjurisprudenze," the neo-scholastic doctrine, modern Catholic legal philosophy, the questions of legal theory and international society are cases in point. Furthermore, in some instances the question arises why some jurists were included while others were not. The reader has a feeling of uncertainty and discomfort, because of the lack of explanation by the editors as to the rationale of their judgment regarding their choices; if this would have been done adequately, the scholarly value of the volume could have been so much greater.

Although the publishers apparently expect that the volume will contribute to the Marxist evaluation of these "bourgeois" scholars, the real value of the publication is that it makes these works — hitherto unavailable to readers without proficiency in foreign languages — accessible to the Hungarian students of legal theory. It is, however, questionable whether the publication of this somewhat haphazard selection of legal theories will meaningfully contribute to knowledge in the larger sense. If this is all that the readers can know, the material will be out of focus; yet it may provide a limited, but valuable insight into non-socialist theory.

The publisher of the volume is a strictly party-controlled institution representing the official Marxist-Leninist scholarship. Therefore, it is not meaningless that the work appeared in print without an ideological critique; it is one more expression of the generally more tolerant academic atmosphere in Hungary.

Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti — Barnabas Racz

Kövület. By Ferenc Fáy. Toronto: Vörösváry Publishing Co., 1977. 131 pp. $10.00.

"You went off to bring back from the blossoms of the Black Rose the dew, which sustains others forever, and in which you too may beautify yourself." With these words Ferenc Fáy launches the Prince on his journey in his most recent book, Petrification. Will the Prince succeed in his quest? "The Treasure? – Your Treasure? — You are too late." The poet does not blame somebody else for what he considers his own failure: "It is your own fault if you live like a prisoner in a cage of petrified faces. And you don't see beyond the hedge of your fingers, where people live." Although he is stuck fast in "the petrified, cruel picture frame," those who until recently had been unsympathetic, now gather round him "that they may see in the transparent firmament of your face, the disintegration of their own faces." The words of the poet had petrified. Hence the unusual title, Petrification. Is his voice indeed frozen into stone? Will his lines of rare beauty and uncommon depth remain sealed in the slowly yellowing pages of his books, because future generations are not interested in reading them? Many of his readers firmly believe that his words will continue to be read. The torments of exile, centuries from now might be a thing of the past, but that pain will always be understood, because it is eternally human. Although most of his poems are permeated with sorrow and loneliness, he is not forsaken. Many of his fellow immigrants share his suffering, and like him, for years have been going through the pangs of hell, and there is no Beatrice for them to bring blessing and relief. They can never forget their birthplace, friends, family and the culture which even in unfavorable times still keeps thriving in the fertile soil of the home country. In Fáy's village, Pécel, the well-to-do villagers, his beloved parents, the respected Uncle Batár, and others as well, who were so full of vitality in his other books, here appear as mere shadows: "Their faces like larva, muddy remembrance." Here his village does not emerge in its pristine beauty. He himself has "to dig the street out of the dust." And the poet-child of yore is "a skeleton, a boy dressed in a blue sailor's suit." As he tries to resurrect his dead, he keeps seeing their decayed bodies, and only the shadows of their spirits are sensed by the reader. Still, how mighty are those shadows. In the "Miraculous Fishing" his net shows wear and tear and "from his crushed fingers drips the wounded sky's blood." "... Dying student heroes of Corvin Street, workers' mangled bodies from the Csepel plants, them I see," says Fáy, "when I cast my net to fish out the young heroes of October from the currents of deep waters." "And

now," continues Fáy, "at night, when the cemeteries take a seat at your bedside, and the dead of the past question you, can you answer them, or have you already been assimilated, and just stand there without understanding them? . . ."[1]

The poet seems to be gradually losing his formerly firm contact with God, who used to be his refuge and a source of strength. The Almighty, not Fáy, started the process of separation. The poet sighs in desperation: "How desolate is the land without you." Nevertheless, he tries to contact Him. In "Rövidzárlat" (Shortcircuit) he dials in vain, for the Lord is constantly on another line. It seems to him, in his bitterness, that the longhaired, marijuana smoking members of fanatical religious sects have appropriated God for themselves: "While they disgrace Him in the churches and in public, the Lord in seeking their favor," says Fáy, "takes drugs and plays the guitar."[2]

Is there a way out of this "world without a doorhandle or key?" Although the poet "is nowhere" and "is nobody" and cannot reach the Lord who seems to be dwelling in the immeasurable distance, still, perhaps he is also "so near to us, that his breathing can almost be heard."[3] Indeed, such nearness seems to have been necessary for writing the most gripping work in the volume: the "Keresztút" (The Way to the Cross). The writing of this poem was not the result of a sudden inspiration, but rather a slow ripening process. The third, fifth and final parts of this work were published several years ago in one of his former volumes of poetry, and only now we see it completed. In the introduction to this poem Fáy writes: "In the 'Keresztút' I endeavor to tell about that God who is in every wound of my life." This is a most unusual allusion to the stigmata. In this writer's opinion Fáy sometimes uses too much figurative speech, but here it does seem excessive. Nature not merely takes part in the events, but fuses with the tragedy. Like Frigyes Karinthy in one of his stories about Christ, Fáy also sees the masses lining the Way to the Cross as a gigantic, bloodthirsty Monster, in whose shapeless form thousands of individuals unite to demand the release of Barabbas.

Perhaps the Messiah is never seen to be more human in suffering than when "his swollen blue tongue, like a piece of rag hung out from his mouth," and when "he lay down as tired men lie in the dust everywhere in the twilight of all times." Thus we are in him, and the Savior is in us. We see his painful progress. He falters under the weight of the cross, while the Hill of Golgotha towers high above the soldiers, priests, wailing women, the mocking, rowdy crowd and the Via Dolorosa. The Hill, in its inevitability, is the Destiny and Fulfillment. Fáy sees in it Pécel's Road to the Cross too. No doubt, there are many thousands of

poor villages like Pécel, scattered from Kamchatka to the Tierra del Fuego, but Fáy is Hungarian and therefore he immortalizes the Hungarian village on the eve of the Second World War.

Could an immigrant ever feel at home in a foreign country? Lajos Kutasi answered this question when he wrote, "The first time a man finds a favorite place in the world outside his homeland, to which he can return without losing his way, where the buildings and the faces of the people somehow are familiar, without being closely acquainted with them, in that place he won't feel himself a stranger any more."[4] Although such a well-liked and familiar place never can make one forget the country of his birth, still it may serve as *terra firma* in which to sink his roots. Is it possible for a writer, who is the living conscience of his people, to accept another country as his second home? Can he pursue a "two-hearted" existence? Tamás Kabdebó, a librarian and writer in England, proves in his own life and works that this is possible. Tibor Flórián after thirty years of wanderings finally found his place. He writes: ". . . For a long time I wandered in desperation, until I found a place in New England with an atmosphere akin to Transylvania. There, in a forest in Connecticut the trees of Transylvania were whispering in the wind. The hills and lakes reminded me strongly of the country of my youth. Thus I sank my roots into the New England soil, but remained Hungarian and European."[5] If the poet, or any immigrant for that matter, refuses the friendship of his new country and its people, how will he ever be able to open the barred window of his life and to step out — to quote Fáy — "Into reality which can be opened only from the inside." He writes in the poem, "Egy hazaindulónak" (To One Who is Returning Home): "Here every branch mocks me . . . ," but elsewhere he describes the beauties of the Canadian countryside and warmly and exquisitely sketches the seasons in the Canadian forests.

In this writer's opinion Fáy's further progress will largely depend on whether he succeeds — if he is willing to try — in finding his emotional balance between his motherland and Canada. Those who think that such a change so late in life is not possible, should consider Tibor Flórián, the thoroughly Hungarian writer who after thirty years found his second home, which he does not think of any more as a foreign land. Fáy says in "Sütkérezés" (Sunbathing): "And you are listening to the walnut-brown silence breaking open its green outer shell and how it falls and rolls among the chairs in the dust. And there is nobody for whom I can crack it open." In this, to a great extent, he is mistaken, for there are thousands of fellow immigrants who eagerly wait for his cracking the walnut-brown silence and will be happy to feast on what he offers for the

sustenance of their spirits. There is a future for Fáy's poetry. The promise of this can be seen in his "Mese a tavaszról" (A Tale About the Spring), whose optimistic mood surprises the reader who has become accustomed to his beautiful, but self-tormenting poems. The sarcastic and self-critical "Halotti maszk" (Deathmask) foreshadows works of a new thematic and stylistic approach. Most of his poems in the volume have a uniformly high quality but the "Keresztút" rises above them all. In it the poet seems to have successfully met the challenge presented by the theme.

László Buday, who so ably illustrated *Kövület,* writes in Krónika: "A deep-seated sorrow chokes us. . . . In vain we search for words to express it. How comforting it is to see those words coming from Fáy through the beautiful epoch of the Keresztút. Your past is revived, and now you can progress and continue to believe in the wonders of Fáy's poetry."[6]

Perhaps here we find the key to the continuing existence of Hungarians scattered in the world — a Future growing out of the sterile soil of the Past.

Maxim Tabory

NOTES

1. Ferenc Fáy's words, quoted from a taped discussion with the author in 1978.
2. Ibid.
3. The quotation is from a poem by this reviewer.
4. *Szabadság* [Liberty] (Cleveland) 88, no. 40 (October 6, 1978): 12.
5. *Krónika* [Chronicle] (Toronto) 5, no. 3 (March 1979): 8.
6. Ibid., 4, no. 1 (January 1978): 13.

44 Hungarian Short Stories. Budapest: Corvina, 1979. 733 pp.

This volume has been published in the series of translations of representative works, European Series, sponsored by UNESCO.

The *44Hungarian Short Stories,* the most ambitious of its kind ever to appear in the English language, follows in the footsteps of the earlier *22 Hungarian Short Stories,* published jointly by Corvina and Oxford University Press, back in 1967.

It is quite understandable in one sense that the editors deemed it necessary to double the selection of the earlier collection. In its excellence the short story in Hungary is only second in poetry. Although

essentially the product of the last decades of the nineteenth century, the variety of themes and techniques demonstrated in nearly a hundred years is indeed impressive. Moreover, the question of the choice of a country's authors represented in an anthology is a difficult and a sensitive one. Few if any editors have ever managed to please everyone. This is not the place to discuss the mechanism of a selection, and, in any event, the reviewer has it easy for his is the last word. Besides, "de gustibus non est disputandum." What ought to be attempted here is then assessment rather than overt criticism in the light of the manifold problems confronting the production of such an anthology.

Initially, an argument may put put forth that quantity may overwhelm quality. Few readers if any will have the patience to read all the selections. Yet, it may be claimed that this is surely not compulsory. The abundance of material might make one lose the way, the perspective, and consequently trap one in an avalanche of theme, character, and imagination.

Secondly, a more important argument for a clarification of the aim of such an anthology might be sought. It would be easy to argue for a more modest collection of stories were Hungary not a *terra incognita* for the majority of the prospective readers. What might the average reader expect to find in a collection of stories from a country with traditions vastly different from his own? Will he more likely search information about life and society or appreciate artistic execution, the writer's competence in telling a story? Will he expect to identify or will he be more adventurous in seeking the exotic? C. P. Snow, the eminent English writer, states in the Preface that "the anthology will teach us something, and something very important, about a remarkable country, and a remarkable literature." The stories, comments Snow further, "spread over a whole range of history and social change, and they represent a good deal of the Hungarian experience. The best of them represent, as one would expect, much more than that, since good art, though it is embedded in its own time and place, speaks to us in a common human voice."

In comparing the earlier twenty-two stories to the present forty-four, one thing immediately stands out: eleven selections are common to both volumes. Since most publications, particularly those of marginal interest to the large public, soon go out of print, the present collection provides a service by making these stories once again available. Yet, one suspects that the choice may have been made on the basis of material already conveniently translated. This new volume, on the other hand, provided an excellent opportunity to publish material as yet unavailable to the English-speaking public.

Nonetheless, let us take a close look at the volume on its own merits. Of the republished stories three are truly first-class, an opinion borne out by the critical comments in each volume. *Omelette a Woburn* (1935) by Dezső Kosztolányi, is about a student travelling from Paris to Budapest. Getting off in Zurich, he walks into a chic restaurant with only a few francs in his pocket. He worries all through his sumptuous meal whether he will have enough money to pay in the end. This is a well-written, uncomplicated story about hidden social tensions. In *The Birthday of Emil Dukich* (1958), a story by Ferenc Karinthy, an elderly professor's young assistant gets drunk, makes a pass at the professor's two daughters, and, finally, his wife. Failing with all three of them, his luck turns and the janitor's wife falls his way. The slightly malicious, witty story about sophisticated Budapest society that the author knows all too well, has a very mid-European flavour to it. The third selection is by Tibor Déry, one of Hungary's major prose writers. Déry is among the few who managed to achieve some reputation in the West. His story, *Ambition and Hilarity* (1946), is about innocent war orphans who murder thoughtlessly for sweets. Another choice from Déry might have been his famous story, *Love,* which is about the imprisonment and release of an innocently convicted political prisoner in the fifties. Definitely more compelling than Boris Palotai's *Promise Darling* (1972), dealing with the same theme.

The re-publication of the other stories raises some questions. Andor Endre Gelléri, a victim of the Holocaust, was one of the most gifted prewar writers of the short story. His writing dealt mainly with the poor, people on the fringes — those with shattered hopes, hoping against hope. Gelléri's *House on an Empty Lot* (1931-1934) is an important and moving story about homelessness. Since this writer is known for his "fairy realism," a fusion of dream and reality, perhaps it may have been wise to choose a more uplifting story which better represents this strong element in his work. Magda Szabó has long been a bestseller, with publications in many languages. Szabó's preoccupation with epic themes is indicative of her strength in the novel and drama, and hence, such themes are too constrained within the boundaries of a short story such as *At Cockrow* (1967), presented here. It is a pity that she is not represented in this volume by *The Guest,* a story with less evidence of epic dimensions about the hazards of an emigré's visit home. *Fear* (1948) is hardly one of the best stories by the excellent writer, Endre Illés, and could have been omitted easily. The same can be said of stories by two classic authors, Gyula Krúdy and Dezső Szomory, *The Last Cigar and the Grey Arab* (1928) and *The Divine Garden* (1909), respectively. These stories as well as the world they reveal appear marginal.

Géza Csáth and Károly Pap represent special cases. Hitherto not widely known, their importance seems to increase with time. A psychiatrist and a music critic of note, Csáth, in his writing, was interested in pathology, particularly in extreme situations. Recent years have witnessed a revival of interest in this pioneering and experimental writer both in Hungary and abroad. The theme of *Music Makers* (1913), the destruction of high hopes in a backward society is typical for East-Central Europe. While an excellent story, *Music Makers* is among Csáth's more traditional works. It is rather his more modern, analytical stories, such as *Matricide* that give Csáth an international status. Károly Pap occupied a unique position in Hungarian literature: he incorporated such themes as the world of the Old Testament and Jewish legends. One of the stories dealing with such themes, it might be argued, might have been more typical and might have added more variety than *Organ* (1927), included here.

Anthologies are not perfect. The editors of the *44 Hungarian Short Stories* were ambitious in attempting to cover all aspects of a country's social and political history. The effort seems to have been not to exclude any author of literary eminence. Yet, too often the selection process yielded to other criteria than literary ones. To paraphrase C. P. Snow, whose comment is that some of the stories "leave out too little," the editors should have extended this thought to leave out more authors. The overall effect is that along with the numerous marvellous and adequate stories there are clearly weak ones, and a certain repetition of theme and approaches is clearly evident.

In Sándor Hunyadi's *Adventure in Uniform* (1930) the protagonist wears a private's uniform in order to get a date with a pretty housemaid. When he sheds his uniform which hides a gentleman, the girl regretfully but proudly leaves him. In *Ignác Vonó* (1963) by Endre Fejes, an ex-soldier marries a middle-class woman and pretends to be an aristocrat. In *Anna Szegi's Kiss* (1939) Pál Szabó employs again the familiar theme of class-distinction. This story ends tragically: both hero and heroine drown themselves because they are not allowed to marry.

Hungarian literature abounds in tales of poverty. This is most evident in stories about peasant life. *Brutes* (1932) by Zsigmond Móricz, Hungary's outstanding writer of prose, has been regarded as a masterpiece ever since it was written. The story relates how two shepherds brutally murder a third and his son and how their crime is uncovered; a shocking tale of backwardness and brutality, told in a terse, dramatic manner. *Brutes* may lose some of its effectiveness when removed from its native context. The unfortunate but inevitable loss is in the flavour of folk

speech. Contemporary English doesn't appear to have the means to convey this important element in the peasant stories. The most gifted chronicler of peasant life since Móricz is Ferenc Sánta. In his stories the tragedy of poverty is always redeemed with an element of the idyll; there is "a ray of sunshine in the realm of darkness." The story *Nazis* (1960), while an important period-piece, does not quite do justice to Sánta's special, huge talent.

To conclude a random sample of stories that raise doubts: György Moldova is perhaps Hungary's most popular and outspoken writer. The story printed here about soccer teams, *Legend of an Outside Right* (1962), is disappointingly long and tedious. The international success of the plays *Catsplay* and *Tot Family* made István Örkény the best-known Hungarian writer abroad ever since Ferenc Molnár. In his native Hungary Örkény's grotesque "one-minute stories" are often ranked above his plays. When well-chosen, their effect will be inescapable even in translation. When no sufficient discrimination is exercised in the selection, however, the English-speaking reader might find them overtly cynical and alien to his sense of humour.

C. P. Snow mentions in the Preface that some of the stories are too long and leisurely by English standards. While this is unfortunately true, length seems less of a factor in a truly good story. The mother in *Smouldering Crisis* (1909), gentle psychological story by Margit Kaffka, had lost both her husband and lover and now lives in withdrawal, only for her son. Her seeming resignation hides a latent anxiety, a mysterious force that inspires the unrequited passion of the narrator, her son's young friend.

One of the collection's best pieces, *The Student and the Woman* (1959) by László Kamondy, also relates an infatuation of a young student for a beautiful mature married woman. While rowing people around on Lake Balaton, the student becomes fascinated with a woman sunbathing on the shore. She tries to fight him off, alternately amused and angered. He is only asking for a kiss; at the end he is given more than he is asking for. Written with a disarming simplicity, the story is on the top of Snow's list. The seldom outstanding István Csurka nevertheless can be counted upon to turn out genuine stories. He is particularly adept at portraying the outclass — people on the fringes. *Kerbside* (1975) is about two elderly streetsweepers. One of them, the woman, is trying to persuade the other, an alcoholic man, that they could make a go of it together.

Among the many somber stories, humour, fun, is a rare guest. With its wry, bizarre humour, Gábor Goda's *Peaceful Sunday* (1960) is such an

exception. The story takes a satiric view of careerism under socialism. The protagonist has two ambitions in life: to be promoted and to get married. He is concerned that promotion should take precedence over marriage as the girl in question is the manager's daughter and "under socialism things like this are tricky." The story takes a tragic turn: discussing his promotion with his boss while swimming long distance in Lake Balaton, the hero suffers heart failure and drowns.

In conclusion it might be said that from a strictly literary point of view a few of the stories are no better than mediocre without a real story base. Several others repeat problems stated in other stories, while the other half are distinguished works. From another point of view, the anthology provides a useful service as a source of information, as an encyclopedia of Hungarian life. When considering the amount of work and care that went into its production and the consistently high quality of its translation, the *44 Hungarian Short Stories* is a worthy addition to the little that had been available in the field. This reviewer cannot help feeling though that more discrimination and a slightly less conservative approach might have produced a smaller but a higher quality volume.

Carleton University — Paul Varnai

A Felvidék az ezeréves magyar államtestben: Magyarok Csehszlovákiában [Upper Hungary in the Thousand-Year-Old Hungarian Body Politic: Hungarians in Czechoslovakia]. By László Sirchich. Cleveland, Ohio, 1979. Published by and available from the author: 2092 West 95th Street, Cleveland, OH 44102. 48 pp. $3.50, paper.

This booklet unites three valuable short studies. The first of these highlights little-known episodes of Hungarian resistance in 1919 to the annexation of Upper Hungary by Czechoslovakia. The episodes include the protest of the citizens of Pozsony/Pressburg (later Bratislava), and their petition for a plebiscite; the defense and eventual counteroffensive by Hungarian military units against the Czechoslovak Legion; and the June, 1920 declaration of Hungarian deputies in the Prague Parliament, branding the annexation of Hungarian-inhabited territories a violation of the principle of self-determination. A brief survey of subsequent efforts to ease the burdens and solve the problems of the Hungarian minority completes the study, bringing it up to the unrealized hopes of the Prague Spring in 1968.

The second study, entitled "From Belvedere to Kassa," traces developments in Slovak-Hungarian relations from the fall of 1938 (Vienna Award) to the reestablishment of pre-war borders in 1945, and the proclamation of the "Košický Program," resulting in punitive measures for Hungarians. The latter — together with other nationalities — were considered to be second-class citizens subject to deportation and expulsion.

The third study deals with the cultural life of Hungarians in Czechoslovakia since 1945, and it is based extensively on Hungarian-language publications in Slovakia, reflecting a mixture of hope and despair by those who live "under the double yoke" of foreign and communist rule.

Although somewhat polemical in nature, the studies attain credibility by the simple fact that the author himself was a participant in the interwar politics of Czechoslovakia, and he is able to draw on personal experiences and observations, as well as original written sources. Currently president of the National Committee of Hungarians in Czechoslovakia (and organization founded in Hungary by the expellees, and now functioning in North America), Mr. Sirchich is considered to be one of the best informed persons concerning the situation of the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia.

Indiana University of Pennsylvania — Edward Chaszar

Veronika Gervers-Molnar
1939—1979

In July 1979 the world of learning lost a young, yet already distinguished scholar when Veronika Gervers-Molnar died after a brief illness.

Vera Molnár, as she was known to many Hungarian specialists, was born and educated in Hungary. In 1966 she married Dr. Michael Gervers, currently of the University of Toronto. Soon thereafter she immigrated to Canada, and joined the Royal Ontario Museum's Textile Department. She continued to work there until her untimely death. During the past few years, she also held a teaching appointment in the University of Toronto's Department of Fine Arts.

Highlights of her career as a student and curator of ancient textiles included the developing of one of the world's most comprehensive collections of early Christian and Moslem fabrics at the Royal Ontario Museum, and the publication of a large volume of essays, *Studies in Textile History* (Toronto, 1977).

In the realm of scholarly publishing, she gained acclaim for two monographic studies: *A középkori Magyarország rotundái* [The Round Churches of Mediaeval Hungary] (Budapest, 1972), and *The Hungarian Szűr: An Archaic Mantle of Eurasian Origin* (Toronto, 1973), as well as for numerous articles in North American and European journals.

Veronica Gervers-Molnar had twice published in our *Review* (Fall, 1975 and Spring, 1977), and since 1975, has been one of our corresponding editors. With her departure we have lost not only a scholar of wide experience and knowledge, but a friend who has been a source of inspiration and encouragement to us.

N.F.D.