

**TRAVELERS OF AN EMPIRE THAT WAS: TOURISM, MOVIE-GOING, AND THE  
FORMATION OF POST-IMPERIAL IDENTITIES IN AUSTRIA AND HUNGARY,  
1918-1944**

by

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

The Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts & Sciences in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2016

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH  
KENNETH P. DIETRICH SCHOOL OF ARTS & SCIENCES

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This dissertation investigates the history of leisure activities in order to understand how former Habsburg subjects made sense of their place in the world at empire's end. It proposes a framework that approaches the history of Austria and Hungary in the 1920s-1930s as the history of geopolitical spaces connected by an imperial past, not simply as the divergent national stories of states insulated by new borders. I shed light on a unique moment in the region's history: the encounter between the cultural legacy of the Habsburg Empire and a rising tide of transnational consumer culture in the form of "democratized" travel and globalized media, both of which challenged the stability of national boundaries and identities. I demonstrate how, first, tourism culture sustained certain transnational imperial traditions and, second, the ways in which the politics of tourism engaged with an array of identities beyond nationality alone. Moreover, this thesis contributes new methodological perspectives to the field of modern European history. In addition to archival and published sources, I analyze popular films of the era as texts of "virtual tourism," whereby millions who could not afford to travel learned about the destinations and habits of tourism without journeying farther than their local cinema.

Chapter 1 establishes the historiographical bases of the work's post-imperial perspective and explains its multidisciplinary methodology. Chapter 2 probes the ways in which tourism promoters imagined the "strangers" they wished to attract and, in the process, kept alive imperial connections. Chapter 3 finds that differences between the two domestic tourist industries illuminate how Austrians and Hungarians, informed by Habsburg-era cultural trends, conceived of the idea of "homeland" in fundamentally different ways. Chapter 4 explores the promotion of rural tourism in Hungary as a mission to "civilize" the peasantry to suit the urban visitor, with roots in the imperial past. Chapter 5 studies "hotel movies" as virtual vacations. It focuses on the history of two prominent hotels and the way contemporary cinema mystified them as fairytale spaces where social and political problems were magically resolved.

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## LIST OF ARCHIVES AND ABBREVIATIONS

MNF	Magyar Nemzeti Filmarchívum (Hungarian National Film Archives)
MOAE	Magyar Osztrák Alpési Egyesület (Hungarian-Austrian Alpine Association)
MOL	Magyar Országos Levéltár (Hungarian State Archives)
OMVESZ	Országos Magyar Vendégforgalmi Szövetség (National Hungarian Hospitality Association)
OMWE	Országos Magyar Weekend Egyesület (National Hungarian Weekend Association)
OÖLA	Oberösterreichisches Landesarchiv (Archives of the State of Upper Austria)
ÖUG	Österreichisch-Ungarische Gesellschaft (Austrian-Hungarian Society)
OSZK	Országos Széchényi Könyvtár (National Széchényi Library)
PML	Pest Megyei Levéltár (Pest County Archives)

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The last three-and-a-half decades (or so) have been good to Austria-Hungary. The publication of Carl Schorske's *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* in 1979 rehabilitated the imperial capital as a "laboratory of modernity" and laid the foundations of what would be, in time, a cottage industry of scholarly work on "Vienna 1900." The revival that unfolded was driven in no small part by a misty remembrance of the Dual Monarchy as a regrettably lost world untarnished by the horrors of totalitarianism or rabid nationalism, a specter of Europe's supposedly more civilized past. In the 1980s, dissident intellectuals declared their allegiance to "Central Europe" as a cultural and political alternative to both Soviet-style communism and NATO-protected capitalism, invoking the memory of a vibrant, multi-national Habsburg Empire.<sup>1</sup> Some observers have since suggested that the European Union could evolve into a resurrected, democratic version of the Habsburg Empire by approximating (and improving upon) the dynasty's role as supranational governor and aegis of pluralist ethnic identities.<sup>2</sup> Historical memory of late Habsburg civilization has lived on perhaps most of all through a newfound (though not necessarily conscious)

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<sup>1</sup> Lonnie R. Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends*, 3rd ed. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 262.

<sup>2</sup> Timothy Snyder, *The Red Prince: The Secret Lives of a Habsburg Archduke* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 264–265; András Gerő, "The Monarchy: Heritage and Memory," in *The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy Revisited*, ed. András Gerő, trans. Thomas J. DeKornfeld and Helen D. DeKornfeld (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 2009), 17; István Deák, "Where's Charlemagne When We Need Him?," *New York Times*, July 1, 2012. In the latter, one is reminded of Deák's earlier examination of the Habsburg military's staunch resistance to the encroachment of nationalism. István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848–1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

appreciation of its cultural brilliance. Gustav Klimt's *The Kiss* (1907-08), a product of *Jugendstil* rebelliousness (though admittedly one of its tamer examples), has become a mechanically-reproduced work of art *par excellence*, lining dorm rooms and presiding over untold months in innumerable wall calendars. Two of the Habsburg world's greatest eulogists, Joseph Roth and Stefan Zweig, have received fresh attention from biographers<sup>3</sup>; one of its greatest critics, Karl Kraus, has lately been summoned to voice prophetic commentary on "our own media-saturated, technologically-crazed, apocalypse-haunted historical moment."<sup>4</sup> Zweig, in particular, is enjoying a long-delayed renaissance as his works have been translated into English and even apotheosized as the melancholic guiding spirit of Wes Anderson's feature film *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014).<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, scholars have begun to examine the memory and legacy of the Habsburg monarchy more systematically. Adam Kozuchowski's *The Afterlife of Austria-Hungary* (2013) provides a broad – and much-needed – survey of interwar reflections on what the Dual Monarchy was and why it collapsed.<sup>6</sup> Robert von Dassanowsky, Gergely Romsics, and Katherine Arens have delved into memoir and fiction as sources for understanding the place of the monarchy in historical memory.<sup>7</sup> William M. Johnston has sought out the traces of a

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<sup>3</sup> On Roth: Ilse Josepha Lazaroms, *The Grace of Misery: Joseph Roth and the Politics of Exile, 1919-1939* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013). On Zweig: Oliver Matuschek, *Three Lives: A Biography of Stefan Zweig*, trans. Allan Blunden (London: Pushkin Press, 2011); George Prochnik, *The Impossible Exile: Stefan Zweig at the End of the World* (New York: Other Press, 2014). Roth also features prominently in Andrew Barker, *Fictions from an Orphan State: Literary Reflections of Austria between Habsburg and Hitler* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> The quotation comes from the first of Jonathan Franzen's numerous footnotes that comprise the idiosyncratic critical apparatus of his *Kraus Project*. Karl Kraus, *The Kraus Project: Essays by Karl Kraus*, trans. Jonathan Franzen, Paul Reitter, and Daniel Kehlmann (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013), 5.

<sup>5</sup> The most direct inspirations from Zweig's *oeuvre* are gathered in Stefan Zweig and Wes Anderson, *The Society of the Crossed Keys: Selections from the Writings of Stefan Zweig*, trans. Anthea Bell (London: Pushkin Press, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> Adam Kozuchowski, *The Afterlife of Austria-Hungary: The Image of the Habsburg Monarchy in Interwar Europe* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Robert Dassanowsky, *Phantom Empires: The Novels of Alexander Lernet-Holenia and the Question of Postimperial Austrian Identity* (Riverside, CA: Ariadne, 1996); Gergely Romsics, *Myth and Remembrance: The Dissolution of the Habsburg Empire in the Memoir Literature of the Austro-Hungarian Political Elite*, trans.

common Austrian-Hungarian cultural “ecosystem” that spanned the divide of the empire’s fall.<sup>8</sup> Though not written for an academic readership, Simon Winder’s *Danubia: A Personal History of Habsburg Europe* (2014) grounds travelogue and yarn-spinning in a solid basis of up-to-date historiography to create a sympathetic Herodotean itinerary through the past.<sup>9</sup> Most ambitious of all, perhaps, is a team of economists’ attempt to show that the Habsburg Empire long ago laid a stronger foundation for trust in the state than did its erstwhile neighbors, lending a certain social-scientific credence to the myth of Franz Joseph as the tireless bureaucrat-in-chief.<sup>10</sup>

It hardly can be mere coincidence that this most recent surge of interest in Austria-Hungary aligns with the centennial commemorations of the World War that destroyed it. Nor can it be by happenstance alone that fresh assessments of the Habsburgs as unsuccessful but determined – and possibly pioneering – tamers of nationalism have come during a time when the radical right is resurgent in Europe, casting itself as the defender of national independence against the imperialism of the E.U. and the United States. Indeed, once condemned as a decrepit “prison of nations,” the Habsburg monarchy has (at least in some circles) been rehabilitated as a more humane alternative to what succeeded it – a period of tribalism, savagery, and totalitarianism that east-central Europeans endured until 1989. This image has even seeped into popular culture, thanks to Anderson’s revival of Zweig: Monsieur Gustave, the flamboyant and stubbornly old-school concierge at the Grand Budapest Hotel embodies the few “faint glimmers

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Thomas J. DeKornfeld and Helen D. Hiltabidle (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 2006); Gergely Romsics, *The Memory of the Habsburg Empire in German, Austrian, and Hungarian Right-Wing Historiography and Political Thinking, 1918-1941*, trans. Thomas Cooper (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 2010); Katherine Arens, *Belle Necropolis: Ghosts of Imperial Vienna* (New York: Peter Lang, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> William M. Johnston, *Zur Kulturgeschichte Österreichs und Ungarns 1890-1938: Auf der Suche nach verborgenen Gemeinsamkeiten* (Vienna, Cologne, and Graz: Böhlau, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Simon Winder, *Danubia: A Personal History of Habsburg Europe* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Sascha O. Becker et al., “The Empire Is Dead, Long Live the Empire! Long-Run Persistence of Trust and Corruption in the Bureaucracy,” IZA Discussion Paper, (March 2011).

of civilization left in this barbaric slaughterhouse that was once known as humanity.”<sup>11</sup> His alpine homeland stands in for a post-Habsburg successor state, and his colorful confection of a hotel represents the last redoubt of the Belle Époque; the cartoonish fascist thugs who occupy the Grand Budapest and, ultimately, execute Gustave are the agents of dark historical forces that snuff out a doomed world.

All told, our knowledge of Austria-Hungary has undergone a transformation for the better. However, the problem with remembering it in this way – other than the obvious danger of romanticizing away the very real conflicts within its societies – is that it leads to the same conclusion that has bedeviled history writing since the monarchy’s collapse: that nationalism was the single defining feature of east-central Europe after the Habsburgs. For the victorious Successor States (Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland, [Great] Romania; one could perhaps also include Italy), 1918 signified the moment at which national histories were restored to their “true” trajectories. No longer under the thumb of “foreign occupation,” as they had been since medieval or early modern times, these peoples were free at last to determine their own futures.

For Hungarians, on the other hand, 1918 and especially 1920 were dates that could live only in infamy. True, they were no longer yoked to Austria – but the victory was Pyrrhic, as independence came at the expense of two-thirds of the historic kingdom and the “imprisonment” of millions of Magyars within the unjust borders of hostile countries. Austria itself suffered from a *lack* of unified nationalism, torn into the three competing political camps (*Lager*). Urban areas, especially “Red Vienna,” were under the sway of Social Democrats, who either rejected nationality in principle or (until 1933) believed that Austria should be folded into the Weimar Republic. Opposing them were the conservative Christian Socials, who dominated the

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<sup>11</sup> As Gustave’s tragicomic self-sacrifice is described by his protégé and heir, Zero Mustafa. I quote from the commercial edition of the screenplay. Wes Anderson, *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (New York: Opus, 2014), 146.



countryside and rallied around vague ideas of Austria's roots in a Catholic and Habsburg past. Calling a plague on both these houses were the German nationalists, who agitated for the overdue creation of an ethnically homogenous Greater Germany. The upshot was a fatally confused sense of national identity that, so the historiography holds, left Austria susceptible first to a homegrown dictatorship and finally to (mostly) willing absorption into the Nazi *Reich*.

But whether the outcome of the First World War produced euphoric or disillusioned nationalisms, the two decades that followed are almost always viewed, as it were, backwards through the shadow of the Second World War, the Holocaust, and the national antagonisms that allowed east-central Europeans to be burned in the crucible of the "bloodlands." This term of course comes from Timothy Snyder's *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (2010).<sup>12</sup> Snyder's metaphor of (eastern) Europe during the 1930s and 1940s is especially dramatic but it is hardly alone in casting the period in similar rhetoric.<sup>13</sup>

Given the enormity of many of the changes that afflicted the whole of Europe at this time, such a viewpoint is entirely comprehensible and is by no means without merit. But, as Tara Zahra remarked not long ago, the field of modern east-central European history is "suffering from nationalism fatigue."<sup>14</sup> It is in need of additional approaches that give nationalism its due but recognize it as only one of multiple themes that must be explored simultaneously. This is imperative if the study of the region is to stay in touch with the new methods and increasingly global perspectives that have entered and will continue to enter the discipline of history at

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<sup>12</sup> Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> See the titles of: Iván T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1998); Piers Brendon, *The Dark Valley: A Panorama of the 1930s* (New York: Knopf, 2000); Zara Steiner, *The Lights That Failed: European International History 1919-1933* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Zara Steiner, *The Triumph of the Dark: European International History 1933-1939* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War, America, and the Remaking of the Global Order, 1916-1931* (New York: Viking, 2014).

<sup>14</sup> "Forum: Habsburg History," *German History* 31, no. 2 (2013): 226.

large.<sup>15</sup> Yet as Pieter Judson observes – and achieves – in his new survey of the Habsburg Empire, “the field of Habsburg history flourishes a site of remarkable creativity and innovation.”<sup>16</sup>

This dissertation rejects a conception of the interwar period as a milestone in isolated national historical chronologies or as the Zero Hour of triumphant (or frustrated) nationalism. It proposes instead that we examine it from a post-imperial perspective: that is, by regarding it as an era defined foremost by the challenges that faced the societies of east-central Europe as they (re)constructed themselves in the wake of a cataclysmic war and the sudden disintegration of centuries-old networks spun within the framework of dynastic empires – the Habsburg, Hohenzollern, Romanov, and Ottoman Empires. From this angle, we can begin to merge the divergent stories of many states, insulated by national boundaries and forced into contact by the friction of competing nationalisms, into a single history of geopolitical spaces connected by imperial pasts. More particularly it allows us to investigate the question of identity construction in the former Habsburg lands in a way that permits circumspect and nuanced understanding of an open-ended array of identities. In short, this study tries to understand how individuals formed identities in a time and region proverbially connected to rampant nationalism, but without presuming that nationality was the most important category of identification in all circumstances.

The research presented in this dissertation demonstrates how a post-imperial perspective both complicates old stories about the 1920s and 1930s and brings new ones to the surface. To

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<sup>15</sup> This echoes (unintentionally, but, given historiographic trends not coincidentally) Jonathan Kwan’s proposition that future study of the Habsburg Empire needs “a new framework which places nationalism not above everything else, but within the intricate matrix of issues arising in the latter decades of the Monarchy and continuing into the successor states.” Jonathan Kwan, “Nationalism and All That: Reassessing the Habsburg Monarchy and Its Legacy,” *European History Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (2011): 106.

<sup>16</sup> Pieter M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap, 2016), 14. Judson’s long-awaited volume became available mere days before the final submission of this dissertation, and so, regrettably, I was not able to consider it here with the fullness it deserves.

that end, it explores how the challenges – and opportunities – of living in post-imperial Austria and Hungary played out in the “everyday” activities of tourism and movie-going. It observes the spaces and discourses associated with leisure travel to learn how they encouraged Austrians and Hungarians to adopt, adapt, or reject identities made available by changing circumstances. Tourism, whether experienced as a vacationer or an industry promoter, confronted people with the need to define where they came from, where they found themselves now, and how they related to strangers from other places. Movie-going, for its part, offered a “virtual reality” encounter with these same places and promises to those who could not afford to travel. The producers of feature films keenly exploited tourism’s cultural cachet by projecting fantasies of resorts and grand hotels as substitute experiences for audiences denied the real thing. Temporarily isolated from daily cares, viewers enjoyed miniature vacations in the emancipating dark of the cinema. Although both of these activities could reflect intensely local tastes and, as was especially the case with tourism, relied profoundly on a sense of attachment to unique places, they were at the same time keyed into global markets and transatlantic cultural exchanges. It is impossible to make a thorough accounting of either tourism or the film industry without looking beyond the borders of the nation or the constraints of “national cinema.” Investigating how Austrians and Hungarians interacted with transnational leisure culture, in conjunction with a post-imperial perspective, therefore helps offer a way of further integrating the history of “Eastern Europe” back into European and global histories *per se*.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> For reflections on the encouraging historiographical trends helping to dissolve fictitious divides between eastern and western Europe, see Tara Zahra’s commentary in “Forum: Habsburg History,” 229.

## 1.1 EMPIRE, INTERRUPTED: DYNASTIC AND NATIONALIST IMPERIALISM IN AUSTRIA-HUNGARY AND AFTER

In order to assemble a post-imperial framework for the interwar period, it is necessary to establish a clear meaning of what, precisely, was “imperial” about Austria-Hungary. There has been a certain amount of debate over just what kind of empire the Habsburg dynasty was ruling by 1900, and even whether we should consider it a formal “empire” at all. Even what to call the state is an unusually complicated question, since it was until its demise a collection of dynastic territories whose formal relationships with each other were defined by their individual constitutional arrangements with the sovereign. The Compromise (*Ausgleich*) of 1867 streamlined the matter by naming the Habsburgs kings of Hungary; but the “Austria” of Austria-Hungary never received an official state name.<sup>18</sup> For the sake of simplicity, historians often refer to all the parts of the monarchy not in the Kingdom of Hungary as “Austria.” But while this makes the lives of students and non-specialists more bearable, it also creates a false sense of easy continuity between today’s Republic of Austria and the entity that existed until 1918. For that reason, other historians – this one included – prefer to call the “Austrian half” of the empire “Cisleithania,” the “Land on This [Western] Side of the River Leitha,” acknowledging the river as the way to create a nationally-neutral dividing line. Yet this, too, is a problematic choice, since sizable portions of “Cisleithanian” territory lay to the east of the river. When thinking of the period until 1918, therefore, we are forced to speak in terms of “Austria” with an asterisk attached.

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<sup>18</sup> Arens, *Belle Necropolis*, 39.

Nomenclature aside, the traditional view has held that Austria-Hungary was indeed a “land empire” – an appellation that, for many (including contemporaries), relegated it to a lesser status than that enjoyed by the maritime colonial empires.<sup>19</sup> Pieter Judson has called this into question by arguing that the precise – and distinct – natures of the Cisleithanian and Hungarian legal, political, and civic institutions after 1867 defy classification alongside those of the other land empires (Ottoman and Romanov), and that they, in fact, cast doubt on the compatibility of most understandings of empire with the realities of the Austro-Hungarian state.<sup>20</sup> Alison Frank Johnson, however, has been building up a case for regarding the Dual Monarchy as “a land caught... between terrestrial and maritime understandings of empire.”<sup>21</sup> One center of its imperium lay at Vienna (to which, I would argue, we should add Budapest) and the other on the docks of Trieste, the dynasty’s Adriatic entrepôt. “Even in the absence of ‘real’ overseas imperialism, that is, of the type that controls territory, monopolizes trade, and exacts tribute,” writes Frank Johnson, “the Habsburg Monarchy engaged in global commercial activity that

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<sup>19</sup> R.J.W. Evans, “Communicating Empire: The Habsburgs and Their Critics, 1700-1919,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 19 (December 2009): 117–38. Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, however, do not hesitate to include the Habsburg, Ottoman, and Romanov empires in their global historical survey, noting the differences from maritime empires but not using this as a basis for the denial of “real” imperial status. Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> Pieter M. Judson, “L’Autriche-Hongrie était-elle un empire?,” *Annales, Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 63, no. 3 (2008): 563–96.

<sup>21</sup> The quotation comes from Alison Frank, “Continental and Maritime Empires in an Age of Global Commerce,” *East European Politics and Societies* 24, no. 4 (November 2011): 779. This article set a research agenda which continued with Alison Frank, “The Children of the Desert and the Laws of the Sea: Austria, Great Britain, the Ottoman Empire, and the Mediterranean Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century,” *American Historical Review* 117, no. 2 (April 2012): 410–44 and will culminate, presumably, in Alison Frank, *Invisible Empire: A New Global History of Austria*, forthcoming with Princeton University Press. One can see premonitions of this overall trajectory in Alison Fleig Frank, *Oil Empire: Visions of Prosperity in Austrian Galicia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), which revealed Austria-Hungary’s meteoric but short-lived rise to the status of global petroleum producer and naval power.

produced and reproduced structures, behaviors, challenges, and opportunities associated with capitalism and imperialism.”<sup>22</sup>

The implosion of the Central Powers’ fighting ability in spring/summer 1918, followed in short order by the dissolution of the empires themselves in November, disrupted two competing sets of imperial projects in dualist Austria-Hungary, terminating one and altering the course of the other. We can see the first of these projects in the Habsburgs’ efforts to preserve their *Hausmacht* and maintain the Great Power status of the empire through their dynastic institutions and the three common ministries. All of this amounted to, in short, Austro-Hungarian imperialism in the typical understanding of the word.<sup>23</sup> Its most spectacular expression was the occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1878, which later became annexation in 1908. The justifications behind this move all came from the standard-issue playbook of nineteenth century European imperial strategies: it was meant to thwart the ambitions of rivals (Serbia), to demonstrate the empire’s military potency (also directed at neighborhood rivals), and to “civilize” supposedly benighted peoples. The Austro-Hungarian central administration pursued these aims with apparent confidence, outwardly taking cues from the British imperial model of “indirect authority” and appointing Benjamin von Kállay, a motivated Hungarian Orientalist possessed of “proconsular visions,” as the first governor of the Condominium of Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>24</sup> With this act of expansion, the Habsburgs added a line to their imperial résumé, but also complicated the already tricky “nationalities question” by bringing large numbers of Serb-speakers and Muslims into the fold. The Imperial and Royal Army also had a chance to try

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<sup>22</sup> Frank, “Continental and Maritime Empires in an Age of Global Commerce,” 782.

<sup>23</sup> For an uneven, but intriguing, collection of attempts to apply postcolonial theory to the Habsburg Empire: Johannes Feichtinger, Ursula Prutsch, and Moritz Csáky, eds., *Habsburg postcolonial: Machtstrukturen und kollektives Gedächtnis* (Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2003).

<sup>24</sup> Robin Okey, *Taming Balkan Nationalism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 55.

its hand at colonial atrocities, which it exercised in a counterinsurgency policy of brutal reprisals and the intimidation of civilians.<sup>25</sup>

New explorations in the “old” field of chancellery history have revealed that the Dual Monarchy was a more energetic, indeed more aggressive, geopolitical force in southeastern Europe than its longstanding reputation as a feeble old derelict would suggest. Its direct occupation of territory was preceded by and then carried out in tandem with diplomatic maneuvering (here, too, thanks to Kállay) that, as Ian D. Armour has shown, kept Serbia locked down as Austro-Hungarian satellite from 1881 until 1903.<sup>26</sup> Although Austria-Hungary’s foreign policy in southeastern Europe ultimately proved self-defeating, its foreign ministry carried it out until the bitter end with all the arrogance of a Great Power. According to Marvin Benjamin Fried, we have been wrong to suppose that the monarchy stayed in WWI only because it was yoked to Germany. The foreign ministry and the supreme military command doggedly pursued a long-term strategic goal of dominance in the Balkans – not just in Bosnia or Serbia, but beyond – for as long as it seemed possible to keep fighting.<sup>27</sup> If the Habsburgs’ empire was phony and fated for extinction, apparently nobody passed that memo to the men in charge of it.<sup>28</sup>

The second imperial project was precisely that force which usually receives credit for having been the monarchy’s downfall: nationalism. Here the objection might be raised that the nationalist movements of 19<sup>th</sup>-century east-central Europe were all in some way *anti*-empire and therefore did not – could not – share the motivations or methods of the empires whose hegemony

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<sup>25</sup> László Bencze, *The Occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1878*, ed. Frank N. Schubert (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 2005), 300–301.

<sup>26</sup> Ian D. Armour, *Apple of Discord: The “Hungarian Factor” in Austro-Serbian Relations, 1867-1881* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2014), esp. xix-xx.

<sup>27</sup> Marvin Benjamin Fried, *Austro-Hungarian War Aims in the Balkans during World War I* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

<sup>28</sup> This is also a position adopted by Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013), 65–99.

they challenged. A nationalist no doubt would have held that nations liberate, while empires conquer and rule. Yet the particular constitutional arrangements of the Dual Monarchy – particularly in the area of public education – encouraged Czech and German nationalists on one hand and Hungarian nationalists on the other to think and operate in imperial terms, albeit in divergent ways.

Long presented in nationalist historiography as struggles of liberation from Habsburg oppression, the work of Pieter Judson, Jeremy King, and Tara Zahra has revealed that the processes of nationalization in Cisleithania had empire-building qualities of their own – all carried out under the constitutional *protection* of the dynastic state.<sup>29</sup> The legal framework that prevailed in Cisleithania between 1867 and 1918 held that all officially recognized languages should enjoy equal status in public life, although German was to remain the language of state. This was supposed to pertain only to individuals, not groups: the Habsburg state staunchly refused to acknowledge nationality as a legal concept until 1905. But with the introduction in 1880 of a census that demanded respondents define themselves according to a single “language of everyday use” (*Umgangssprache*), nationalists gained powerful demographic tools. They could, however speciously, point to language use as a proxy for national identity and use census data to measure their nation’s apparent strength across provinces. By these means, Czech and

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<sup>29</sup>Jeremy King, “The Nationalization of East Central Europe: Ethnicism, Ethnicity, and Beyond,” in *Staging the Past: The Politics of Commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe, 1848 to the Present*, ed. Maria Bucur and Nancy M. Wingfield (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2001), 112–52; Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008); Pieter M. Judson, “Marking National Space on the Habsburg Austrian Borderlands, 1880-1918,” in *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands*, ed. Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 122–35. Gary B. Cohen stresses the point that these nationalisms operated within, rather than opposed to, the framework of the imperial Austrian state in “Nationalist Politics and the Dynamics of State and Civil Society in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1867-1914,” *Central European History* 40, no. 2 (2007): 241–78.



German nationalist activists created language “borderlands” that needed to be contested and conquered through schools, voluntary migration, and tourism.<sup>30</sup> Though their perspective was national, the activists’ mindset was imperialist: each nation was locked in a zero-sum struggle to expand its population and, in turn, its territory. While the British, French, Belgian, and German Empires scrambled to claim as much of Africa as possible, the nationalists of the Habsburg Empire scrambled, on a smaller scale, to impose their own hegemony over sections of Austria. They based their claims not on radical “otherness” (white administrators and colonists versus non-white natives), but instead on an assumption of sameness (Czech speakers belong to the Czech nation, German speakers to the German, etc.). Yet this process entailed its own forms of identity-imposition, for those who were multilingual or “nationally indifferent” were pressured – often with the promise of social services, but occasionally with violence – to choose a side.

Hungarian nationalism after 1867 brought together the Great Power imperialism of the monarchy as a whole with a privileged form of the aggressive nation-building demonstrated by the Cisleithanian movements. Constitutionally, the Kingdom of Hungary was, in the words of Zoltán Szász, “an empire within an empire.”<sup>31</sup> Franz Joseph I was crowned king in 1867; his royal seat in Buda (soon to be Budapest) rose to the same status as Vienna and, indeed, became an imperial capital in its own right. Transylvania, a separately-administered Habsburg principality since 1711, was annexed to Hungary in the same year per the wishes of the Hungarian leaders in Pest, thus fulfilling one of the revolutionary demands of 1848. Croatia and Slavonia were consolidated into a single kingdom; in 1868 the Hungarian crown reached a kind

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<sup>30</sup> Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), 1–18.

<sup>31</sup> Zoltán Szász, “The Nation-State in a Multinational Empire,” in *The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy Revisited*, ed. András Gerő, trans. Thomas J. DeKornfeld and Helen D. DeKornfeld (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 2009), 183. Cf. Richard Evans, who attests that after 1867 “Hungarians defined their own country more and more as a distinct empire (*birodalom*).” Evans, “Communicating Empire: The Habsburgs and Their Critics, 1700-1919,” 133.

of Compromise-within-a-Compromise (in Croatian, *Nagodba*) with Croatia-Slavonia, granting Zagreb a certain measure of political autonomy.

Within Hungary itself, the dualist framework allowed the Magyar elite to run their country as a virtually independent nation-state while at the same time profiting from the economic benefits of the Habsburg customs union and the international prestige of the monarchy's place in the Concert of Europe. It also encouraged Hungarian nationalists to focus less on the struggle for independence from Austria (although the rhetoric of oppression and separatism never wholly disappeared) and more on a policy for dealing with the non-Hungarian-speakers living in the Kingdom of St. Stephen. At their core, these policies were meant to accomplish two things: the cultural (and political) assimilation of the non-Magyars and the containment of non-Magyar nationalist movements seeking greater autonomy. Contemporaries and historians have long debated whether the Nationalities Law of 1868 promulgated in Hungary was a weapon for the suppression of other nationalisms or a liberal guarantee of space in civil society for them.<sup>32</sup> Szász argues that the law was, in fact, a “compromise between those who wanted individual nationality programs to establish national autonomies and those who demanded a unified Hungarian national state.”<sup>33</sup> In the early years of the Dualist Era, non-Hungarian cultural and ecclesiastical organizations operated freely; but, in time, the determinedly elitist nature of the Hungarian state choked off non-Hungarian nationalist political participation, and patently (if ultimately unsuccessful) Magyarizing educational policies further

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<sup>32</sup> In C.A. Macartney's (sympathetic) paraphrase, “The Nationalities Law began with the remarkable preamble which stated that all citizens of Hungary formed, politically, a single nation, the indivisible, unitary Hungarian nation, and that their equality of rights could be qualified only in respect of the official usage of the various languages...” C.A. Macartney, *Hungary: From Ninth Century Origins to the 1956 Uprising* (New Brunswick and London: AldineTransaction, 2008), 170.

<sup>33</sup> Szász, “The Nation-State in a Multinational Empire,” 184.

denied the so-called “nationalities” access to the kind of state support they enjoyed in Cisleithania.<sup>34</sup>

With a view to its centralizing, assimilationist tendencies and its basis on a vision of the nation as “one and indivisible,” Hungary of the Compromise era is readily comparable to Third Republic France. Certainly, the comparison has its limits. As Karen Barkey has pointed out, the Hungarian élite, composed mainly of large landowners and gentry, was fearful of industrialization and the alteration of the quasi-feudal agricultural labor system, and thus did not countenance a massive state-driven rural development program on the order of France’s Freycinet Plan.<sup>35</sup> Republicanism of any stripe was, to say the least, strictly out of the question for these magnates. Yet the situation in Hungary nonetheless brings to mind what Eugen Weber said so eloquently of the campaign to convert the culturally diverse peasantry of 19<sup>th</sup>-century France into Frenchmen as defined by Paris: it was “akin to colonization.”<sup>36</sup> Even if it is accurate to describe Dualist Hungary as a nation-state within an empire, the ambitions of nation-states to homogenize reflect in themselves an often unacknowledged form of imperialism. “Order imposed by men of different code and speech, somebody else’s order, is not easily distinguished from foreign conquest.”<sup>37</sup>

That the Hungarian ruling élite saw themselves as civilizers amidst less developed societies can be gleaned from Count Albert Apponyi’s speech to the victorious powers in 1920. As leader of the Hungarian delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, Apponyi implied that Hungary’s imperial mission in southeastern Europe had been to act as *Kulturträger*, the bearer of

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 184–185.

<sup>35</sup> Karen Barkey, “Negotiated Paths to Nationhood: A Comparison of Hungary and Romania in the Early Twentieth Century,” *East European Politics and Societies* 14 (2000): 511–512.

<sup>36</sup> Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 486.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 487.

Western culture to childlike “races” – perhaps anticipating that the rhetoric of empire would appeal to the British, French, Italian, and American delegates, all of whom represented countries with imperial commitments of some sort. “Only one consequence will evidently follow, which I beg leave to mention without meaning offense to anyone. I only wish to point out the fact that the consequence would be the transference of national hegemony to races at present mostly occupying a lower grade of culture. [...] I should imagine that the transference of national hegemony to an inferior grade of civilization could not be a matter of indifference to the great cultural interests of humanity.”<sup>38</sup> Apponyi’s formulation “transference of national hegemony” suggests, as well, that he presumed the Magyar “race” to have served as rightful hegemon prior to the collapse of the Dual Monarchy.

That moment of dissolution did not, however, spell doom for all of the imperial projects that had been carried on beforehand. The self-assigned historical missions of the Habsburg dynasty obviously did not survive, although ideologues of the Dollfuss régime later attempted to use them as a means of clarifying a post-imperial Austrian identity.<sup>39</sup> But, in addition to greater or larger chunks of the family real estate, each of its heirs received some piece of the dynasty’s imperial system. Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia inherited the Habsburgs’ struggle with the Nationalities Question. It was now their lot to play the part of multiethnic umbrella states, with Yugoslavia, in Simon Winder’s estimation, rather like a “new, southern version of the Habsburg Empire minus the Habsburgs.”<sup>40</sup> The addition of Transylvania, Bukovina, Bessarabia, and Dobrudja significantly enlarged Romania, but this growth came at the price of greater ethnic

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<sup>38</sup> “Address of the President of the Hungarian Peace Delegation, Count Apponyi, to the Supreme Council, January 16, 1920,” in *Hungary at the Paris Peace Conference: The Diplomatic History of the Treaty of Trianon*, by Francis Deák (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 541–542.

<sup>39</sup> Anton Staudinger, “Austrofaschistische ‘Österreich’-Ideologie,” in *Austrofaschismus: Politik - Ökonomie - Kultur, 1933-1938*, ed. Emmerich Tálos and Wolfgang Neugebauer (Vienna: LIT Verlag, 2005), 28–52.

<sup>40</sup> Winder, *Danubia: A Personal History of Habsburg Europe*, 489.

diversity. In response, the élite in Bucharest adopted a policy of centralization and cultural homogenization – thus turning Romania into, as it were, an ironic inverse of Dualist Hungary.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, Pieter Judson has contended that we might profit from viewing the successor countries not as the “self-styled nation-states” their leaders claimed, but rather as “little empires” that each had to perform the Habsburgs’ old role in managing the “integration of multiethnic populations.”<sup>42</sup>

Austria and Hungary, the former “cores” of the Dual Monarchy, “faced comparable hardships and encountered common difficulties” as they entered the 1920s.<sup>43</sup> Both were economically unstable and undersized polities, in the sense that their administrative apparatuses were suddenly too large for current needs. Upon their populations was placed a shared burden of guilt for having started the First World War. Austria lost all claim to an imperial mission, but, in its cultural and architectural legacy, inherited nonetheless many of the physical trappings of the old empire. And while it was liberated from the Nationalities Question once and for all, Austria also inherited – fatefully – Pan-German nationalism and political activists with persistent desires to unite with Germany. Finally, there was Hungary, which to a surprising degree inherited itself, retaining the dignity of kingdom and most of the basic prewar parliamentary system built around an anti-democratic, single-party political machine. As the Irish novelist George A. Birmingham (né James Owen Hannay) remarked in 1925, “It is an odd example of the twists which history takes that the Hungarian colours, once a half defiance of the Habsburg power, should now be the

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<sup>41</sup> Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995). For a direct comparison of Hungary and Romania, see: Barkey, “Negotiated Paths to Nationhood: A Comparison of Hungary and Romania in the Early Twentieth Century.”

<sup>42</sup> Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, 451.

<sup>43</sup> John C. Swanson, *The Remnants of the Habsburg Monarchy: The Shaping of Modern Austria and Hungary, 1918-1922* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2001), 3.

only sign left of any loyalty to that unfortunate family.”<sup>44</sup> However, the Hungarian imperial mission had changed. Gone, for the most part, were the Slovaks, Romanians, and Serbs in need of assimilation; but gone, too, were the territories they had lived in. Redeeming these lands by one means or another became the new Hungarian imperial agenda. The Compromise Era drive to civilize the countryside lived on as well, though it was now directed at Hungarians themselves (as will be examined in Chapter 4).

## **1.2 THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONTOURS OF THE POST-IMPERIAL MOMENT**

Kaiser Franz Joseph I, who had embodied the unity and continuity of his realm in a way few modern European monarchs ever did, died in November 1916. The state he had inherited in 1848 and preserved through compromise, tradition, and repression did not die with him; but it was clear – and had been chillingly so since the sudden, violent deaths of his two leading heirs in 1889 (Rudolf) and 1914 (Franz Ferdinand) – that the heartbeat of the empire rhymed too closely with his own. His successor and grandnephew Karl I of Austria/Karl IV of Hungary, inherited an empire mired in war, but one whose future was still not yet determined. After the failed Central Power offensives in the spring of 1918, it became clear that Austria-Hungary and its allies no longer had the wherewithal to emerge as winners. Presiding over an exhausted and starving realm and a discredited state, and challenged by swelling popular support for national independence movements, Karl renounced his participation in state affairs (but did not yet

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<sup>44</sup> George A. Birmingham, *A Wayfarer in Hungary* (London: Methuen & Co., 1925), 11.

abdicate) on November 11, 1918, the same day armistice was declared, and bid “his peoples” to choose their own forms of government.

These actions terminated hostilities with the Allied and Associated Powers, but they did not put a stop to warfare in east-central Europe. For three more years violence remained the foremost determinant of what territory fell within which borders. The Austro-Hungarian and German imperial militaries filed into the ranks of new national armies, dissolved ignominiously into waves of refugees, or gathered into paramilitary bands that followed a chaotic variety of ideological, regional, and personal allegiances.<sup>45</sup> Armies of occupation, sometimes in coordination with the victorious, French and British, sometimes not, claimed sections of the Habsburg realm in the name of national self-determination: Italian soldiers seized South Tyrol from Cisleithania; the new Czechoslovak army marched into the highlands of northern Hungary; Romanian forces flooded into Transylvania, battling their way as far west and north as Szeged and Debrecen; a tiny multinational Banat Republic lasted two weeks before Serbian troops put an end to the experiment. *Heimatschutz* irregulars in Carinthia defended their province – but not “Austria” as such – from Yugoslav invaders, and other German-speaking militias carved a new province out of western Hungary, the Burgenland, which stood as the only Austrian territorial gain after 1918.

Violence was a defining force in the creation of post-imperial Hungary. The first independent Hungarian successor state was a democratic, left-liberal republic under the

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<sup>45</sup> The historiography of paramilitary violence in post-WWI central and eastern Europe is today in a period of growth. See: Béla Bodó, “The White Terror in Hungary, 1919-1921: The Social Worlds of Paramilitary Groups,” *Austrian History Yearbook* 42 (2011): 133–63; Robert Gerwarth and John Horne, “Vectors of Violence: Paramilitarism in Europe after the Great War, 1917-1923,” *Journal of Modern History* 83, no. 3 (2011): 489–512; Jochen Böhrer, “Enduring Violence: The Postwar Struggles in East-Central Europe, 1917-1921,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 50, no. 1 (2015): 58–77; Emily R. Gioielli, “‘White Misrule’: Terror and Political Violence during Hungary’s Long World War I, 1919-1924” (Ph.D. dissertation, Central European University, 2015); Robert Gerwarth and Uğur Ümit Üngör, “The Collapse of the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires and the Brutalisation of the Successor States,” *Journal of Modern History* 13, no. 2 (2015): 226–48.

leadership of Count Mihály Károlyi. Unable to marshal sufficient political, economic, and military resources, however, the republic foundered on its twin failures to redistribute landed estates to the peasantry and to defend the country from invasion.<sup>46</sup> Over half of the territory of the prewar Kingdom of Hungary had been occupied by foreign armies by the time that Károlyi, asked by the western powers to cede yet more ground, set down the reigns of state after only four months.<sup>47</sup> Picking them up immediately were Béla Kun and his Communist cadres, who had been forming a Red Army in hopes of ejecting the Czechoslovak, Romanian, and Yugoslav forces and imposing a soviet-style dictatorship of the proletariat with Russian help. Despite early successes, Kun was no more effective in the former than Károlyi had been; in the latter, he and his ministers alienated both the urban workers and the peasants while leading a campaign of “red terror” against class enemies.<sup>48</sup> The (first) Hungarian communist state endured a mere 133 days before being driven from Budapest by Romanian troops and “white” counterrevolutionaries. One set of counterrevolutionaries traveled west from Vienna, comprising mainly aristocrats, and another surged up from Szeged. The “men of Szeged” distinguished themselves as anti-communist, antisemitic right-wing radicals who took revenge on their “Judeo-Bolshevik” enemies through their own even more vicious brand of “white terror.”<sup>49</sup> The military strongman who rode into Budapest at the head of their column in November 1919 was Miklós Horthy, former commander of the Habsburg navy and the Hungarian head of state until October 1944.

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<sup>46</sup> Swanson, *The Remnants of the Habsburg Monarchy*, 58.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 70–81.

<sup>48</sup> Macartney, *Hungary: From Ninth Century Origins to the 1956 Uprising*, 205.

<sup>49</sup> Paul Hanebrink has cited 590 deaths as the result of the “red terror” under Kun, while Thomas Lorman projects 1,500–2,000 killed and perhaps as many as 70,000 imprisoned by the “whites.” Paul Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary: Religion, Nationalism, and Antisemitism, 1890–1944* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006), 72; Thomas Lorman, *Counter-Revolutionary Hungary: István Bethlen and the Politics of Consolidation* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2006), 5.



If the continuation of violence in Hungary after the armistice pressed one indelible stamp on the country's post-imperial character, then the advent of formal peace pressed another. In June 1920 agreed to the terms of the Treaty of Trianon, which dispersed approximately two-thirds of the territory and a bit more than half of the kingdom's 1910 population to the surrounding states. The new Hungarian state was just shy of eight million inhabitants, approximately 90 percent of whom identified as Hungarians. Though rationalized by the Great Powers as a means of ensuring Wilsonian "national self-determination" to the Czechs, Slovaks, Romanians, Croats, and Serbs of the fallen empire, the treaty, known simply as "Trianon," put a legal seal on the real territorial partitions wrought by military action in 1918 and 1919. While the direct economic effects were not perhaps as dire as contemporaries perceived – by some measures, the Hungarian economy actually came out "more dynamic" than before – the social and political consequences were immense.<sup>50</sup> Demonstrations of refusal to accept this outcome became a major theme in Hungarian public life after 1920, and irredentism an implicit, if until the mid-1930s internationally sensitive, foreign policy objective.

Although the conversion to post-empire was certainly a turbulent, even traumatic one, it did not immediately result in very many lasting changes in the structure of politics and society. The political arrangement that emerged by 1922 had been predicated largely on three primary aims: first, counter-revolution, that is, to erase the political changes wrought by the twin upheavals of 1918-1919 and to punish liberalism and the radical, "atheistic" forces it had invited into power; second, the reestablishment of the basic domestic political order that had been in

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<sup>50</sup> The idea that Trianon cast off economic dead weight is made in Miklós Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision in Hungary, 1920-1945*, trans. Thomas J. DeKornfeld and Helen D. DeKornfeld (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 2007), 49–50 and Andrew C. Janos, *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary, 1825-1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 206.

force before the war, but on a tighter ideological leash.<sup>51</sup> The third aim was to undo the effects of the Treaty of Trianon. Hungary therefore returned to parliamentary monarchy, not with a Habsburg on the throne but with Horthy as Regent.

From 1922 until at least 1931, parliament and its ministries were run by Prime Minister István Bethlen and his National Unity party – an arrangement similar to the Tisza political machine that had held power for long periods between 1867 and 1918. Only after Bethlen's failure to handle the Depression drove him from power in 1931 did the forces of radical political change, all from the right, begin to mount a serious challenge to the power of the old regime. The government of Gyula Gömbös from 1932 through 1936 flirted with fascism, but Gömbös's sudden death cut short his experiment. By 1939, however, Hungary had gladly dealt with Hitler for sections of occupied Czechoslovakia, and the votes from a newly expanded franchise elected the Arrow Cross party, the country's homegrown fascists, into the position of second-largest in parliament. In 1941, Hungary joined the war on the side of the Axis; in 1944, its state machinery worked diligently with Eichmann to send off more than 600,000 Hungarian Jews to extermination.<sup>52</sup>

The transformation of Cisleithania into an Austrian nation-state was in some ways an inversion of the process that created post-imperial Hungary: relatively smooth and with comparatively little bloodshed, but with a political structure drastically unlike what had existed before the war.<sup>53</sup> As the Slavic- and Italian- speaking areas of Cisleithania seceded or were

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<sup>51</sup> For some views on the politics of consolidation, see: C.A. Macartney, *October Fifteenth: A History of Modern Hungary, 1929-1945*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1957), 36; Thomas Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback: Miklós Horthy, 1918-1944* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1994), 59–105; Lorman, *Counter-Revolutionary Hungary*.

<sup>52</sup> Randolph Braham, *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (New York and Boulder: The Rosenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies and Social Science Monographs, 1994).

<sup>53</sup> On the peculiarly (though not uncontested) consensual transition of power in Austria: Klemens von Klemperer, "Das nachimperiale Österreich, 1918-1938: Politik und Geist," in *Österreich und die deutsche Frage im 19. und 20.*

occupied in 1918, “what was left” – in Georges Clemenceau’s memorable but falsely attributed *bon mot*<sup>54</sup> – became Austria. The Republic of German-Austria (Deutschösterreich), rather peacefully declared on November 12, 1918, was foiled by the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye signed in September 1919. The treaty forbade the union with Germany expressed in the republic’s constitution, insisting on the international guarantee of Austrian independence. The result was a politically “unloved” federal state of some 6.5 million people, of whom around two million lived in the Vienna metropolitan area.<sup>55</sup>

Steven Beller has called the Austrian state cobbled together at the end of World War One a “land without qualities,” channeling that light of interwar Viennese modernism (and Habsburg nostalgia), Robert Musil. In Beller’s judgment, “Austrian history from 1918 to 1945 is a history of people struggling, and failing, to resolve the profound issues raised by the Habsburg Monarchy’s collapse.” This failure, he argues, was twofold: the failure of the first Republic of Austria to create an adequate “Austrian” identity and of the flawed “political logic that insisted on the ‘nation’ as the primary political unit.”<sup>56</sup> In stating the former, Beller recapitulates an idea with a long past and a deep literature: that when the Nazi state in 1938 sought to achieve by force what the law had prohibited in 1919, there were far too few Austrians interested in defending the still-inchoate concept of “Austria.”<sup>57</sup> Although it makes for a tidy quip, the characterization of a

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*Jahrhundert: Probleme der politisch-staatlichen und soziokulturellen Differenzierung im deutschen Mitteleuropa*, ed. Heinrich Lutz and Helmut Rumpel (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1982), 304.

<sup>54</sup> Andrea Stangl, “Myths and Narratives: ‘The Rest Is Austria!’ ... or Something Like That,” trans. Leigh Bailey, *The First World War and the End of the Habsburg Monarchy*, 2015, <http://ww1.habsburger.net/en/chapters/myths-and-narratives-rest-austria-or-something>.

<sup>55</sup> A phrase commonly associated with interwar Austria, “unloved state” is the title of one survey of the period: Friedrich Weissensteiner, *Der ungeliebte Staat: Österreich zwischen 1918 und 1938* (Vienna: ÖBV, 1990).

<sup>56</sup> Steven Beller, *A Concise History of Austria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 197.

<sup>57</sup> Elisabeth Barker, *Austria, 1918-1972* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1973); Gordon Brook-Shepherd, *The Austrians: A Thousand-Year Odyssey* (London: HarperCollins, 1996); F.L. Carsten, *The First Austrian Republic, 1918-1938: A Study Based on British and Austrian Documents* (Aldershot: Gower, 1986); Ernst Hanisch, *Der lange Schatten des Staates: Österreichische Gesellschaftsgeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert* (Vienna: Ueberreuter, 1994);

“land without qualities” is misleading. Austria, as a federal republic of nine *Bundesländer* (eight, after Vienna was folded into Lower Austria in 1921), was in fact a land of many qualities. It contained a patchwork of historical and provincial identities that had solidified long before<sup>58</sup>; competing cultures based on international socialism or Catholic traditionalism; and, perhaps the one point on which Austrians could find agreement, membership in a vast, linguistically diverse community of *Deutschtum*, “Germandom,” whose most apparently successful abode in 1919 was the German *Reich*. As in Hungary, the peace treaty that formalized a post-imperial Austria was generally resented. But in this case it seemed to demonstrate what Austria *should have been* – part of Germany – rather than what it used to be.

Through 1933, the three major parliamentary parties, the Christian Socials, the Social Democrats, and the German Nationalists all had (in ascending order) lesser or stronger sympathies towards Anschluss, or union with Germany.<sup>59</sup> However, the turbulent years of 1933 and 1934 changed the parameters of this question. In 1933, an aggressive Nazi state came to power, hostile to both Social Democrats and the Catholicism of the Christian Socials. That same year, chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss suppressed parliament and imposed the rule of a corporatist, anti-democratic, nationalist, Catholic-influenced “Corporative State” (*Ständesstaat*).<sup>60</sup> The

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Barbara Jelavich, *Modern Austria: Empire and Republic, 1815-1986* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

<sup>58</sup> Nicole Felder, *Die historische Identität der österreichischen Bundesländer* (Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2002).

<sup>59</sup> Stanley Suval, *The Anschluss Question in the Weimar Era: A Study of Nationalism in Germany and Austria, 1918-1932* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974); Alfred D. Low, *The Anschluss Movement, 1931-1938, and the Great Powers* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1985); Evan Burr Bukey, *Hitler's Hometown: Linz, Austria, 1908-1945* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986); Julie Thorpe, *Pan-Germanism and the Austrofascist State, 1933-38* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2011).

<sup>60</sup> The question of whether to refer to the *Ständesstaat* and the dictatorial regimes of Dollfuss and Schuschnigg as “fascist” – specifically in the form of a special “Austrofascism” distinct from Italian and especially German models – is historically and politically fraught. Michel Dobry contends that the traditionally dominant desire to perfect a definition and categorizations of fascism has led scholars on an endless quest to find “generic fascism” that yields very few intellectually satisfying results. He urges instead a greater sensitivity towards the “indigenous” ascriptions that historical actors gave to their own political movements and, more broadly, that we avoid trying to judge

strangulation of electoral democracy was followed in the late winter of 1934 by a short but damaging civil war erupted between the Austrian government and its conservative militia allies (the *Heimwehr*) against the Social Democrats and their private army, the *Republikanischer Schutzbund*. Then, that summer, Chancellor Dollfuss fell to assassins in a botched Nazi coup d'état. His successor, Kurt Schuschnigg, attempted to follow through on the policies of identity-construction Dollfuss had started: the *Ständestaat* emphasized its “Austrianness” – that is, its opposition to Nazi German hegemony – in part by drawing heavily on the Habsburg past. This was a sharp contrast from the attitudes of the left-wing parties and German Nationalists, who had grounded their visions of Austria’s future on an assumption of zero historical continuity, and an elevation of the Christian Social claim of inheritance to the Habsburg legacy. In the end, which came in March 1938, these policies were not enough, and throngs of Austrians hailed their “return” *Heim ins Reich* – “back home to the [German] Empire” – with open arms.<sup>61</sup>

The societies of both Austria and Hungary were deeply affected by what might be called “culture wars,”<sup>62</sup> the origins of which lay in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century but which escalated by turns

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apparently “fascist” movements against ideal types (the so-called “fascist minimum”) that, at base, are skewed by their reliance on the “successful” Italian and German fascisms as the ultimate benchmark. In that spirit, I prefer to stick to calling the system put in place by the Dollfuss and Schuschnigg governments as the *Ständestaat*. This has the dual advantage of being its architects’ self-ascription as well as an uncontroversial and positive (i.e. stating what we can confirm it *was*, with reference only to itself) definition of its core ideology. In choosing this path I by no means do I intend to declare that the regime was “not as bad as” other repressive governments of the 1930s – specifically that it was somehow “better than” Nazism – much less apologize for it in any way by not calling it “fascist.” The fact is that I am not interested in assaying what was or was not “truly” fascist – an oftentimes normative and circular pursuit that will not in any case bear on the research presented here. Michel Dobry, “Desperately Seeking ‘Generic Fascism’: Some Discordant Thoughts on the Academic Recycling of Indigenous Categories,” in *Rethinking the Nature of Fascism: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. António Costa Pinto (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 53–84. For some of the main contributors to the debate in this field, see: Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 250; Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Knopf, 2004), 115; Julie Thorpe, “Austrofascism: Revisiting the ‘Authoritarian State’ 40 Years On,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 45, no. 2 (2010): 315–43.

<sup>61</sup> Evan Burr Bukey, *Hitler’s Austria: Popular Sentiment in the Nazi Era, 1938-1945* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

<sup>62</sup> I adopt the use of this term from Paul Hanebrink, in particular from Paul Hanebrink, “Transnational Culture War: Christianity, Nation, and the Judeo-Bolshevik Myth in Hungary, 1890-1920,” *Journal of Modern History* 80 (March 2008): 55–80. See also Hanebrink’s extended work in Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary*.

over the course of the post-WWI years and on through the 1920s and 1930s. Common to both was a backlash against classical liberalism, conflict over the extent to which Jews could (or should be allowed to) belong within the nation, feelings of alienation between industrialized cities and their “backwards” rural hinterlands, and struggle over whether socialism represented justice for the proletariat or a new form of godless barbarity. These clashes were not unique to Austria or Hungary – virtually the whole of Europe faced them in some capacity<sup>63</sup> – but the peculiar ways in which those two states emerged from the wreckage of the Habsburg Empire, and the fact that both were saddled with the guilt of having started and lost the First World War, put a certain stamp on the lines of battle.

Antisemitism was a driving factor in political and social change in both countries; its roots stretched back well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The stubbornly supranational Habsburg state had some of its most loyal subjects in Jews, who were able to take advantage of the ascendancy of liberalism in the 1860s and make an indelible mark on the empire’s economy, urban culture, professions, and intellectual life.<sup>64</sup> However, Jewish success was met with myriad forms of antisemitism, particularly beginning in the 1880s. It thundered to the forefront of Austrian politics “in a new key” with the rise of Karl Lueger, mayor of Vienna from 1897 until 1910, and his Christian Social party.<sup>65</sup> When the Habsburgs vanished, Austrian Jews lost both their revered patron and the broad-tent imperial identity that offered refuge from the exclusionary tendencies of the various nationalisms. Indeed, according to Lisa Silverman, one of the few stable features

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<sup>63</sup> Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000).

<sup>64</sup> Studies on the definition and evaluation of the place of Jews in the Habsburg lands are legion, but one place to start is Steven Beller, *Vienna and the Jews, 1867-1938: A Cultural History* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>65</sup> The contention that Lueger, alongside the German Nationalist Georg von Schönerer and founder of modern Zionism Theodor Herzl, heralded “politics in a new key” of course comes from the late Carl Schorske’s titular classic essay. Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 116-180. A deeper study of the Christian Socials, and a landmark in its own right, is John W. Boyer, *Culture and Political Crisis in Vienna: Christian Socialism in Power, 1897-1918* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

of “Austrian” identity after 1918 was the way in which social categories (class, gender, and nation) were defined, to a great degree, by the dichotomy “Jewish”/“non-Jewish.”<sup>66</sup>

In Hungary, the state system was (after 1920) less volatile and “Hungarianness” was a more stable concept than interwar “Austrianness” ever became, though it was still multifarious and subject to contestation.<sup>67</sup> The watchword for cultural politics in the Horthy era was “Christian and national,” that is, what was good and proper in public display should be non-Jewish and narrowly patriotic.<sup>68</sup> Krisztián Ungváry has argued in his ambitious pre-history of the Holocaust in Hungary, *A Horthy rendszer mérlege* [The Balance-Sheet of the Horthy System], that antisemitism was built into the very workings of the interwar Hungarian state.<sup>69</sup> As the state expanded – with popular support – in the late 1930s to combat unemployment and broaden its social safety net, so too did its discrimination against Jews. Taking their cues from the government’s sharpening rhetoric and increasingly exclusionary policies, non-Jewish Hungarians participated willingly in their own increasing radicalization, until such time when anti-Jewish laws (1938, 1939, and 1941), the conscription of Jewish labor, and deportations of Jews (and others) to Nazi extermination camps would meet with virtually no resistance. Indeed, it was ironically the intervention of the state itself, when Horthy called a halt to the deportations in the summer of 1944, rather than any significant form of popular disapproval, that offered decisive resistance to the triumph of antisemitism.

Closely connected to, but nonetheless distinct from, the politics of antisemitism was a discursive “culture war” between the city and the countryside. To be sure, antisemitism was a

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<sup>66</sup> Lisa Silverman, *Becoming Austrians: Jews and Culture between the World Wars* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 8.

<sup>67</sup> János Gyurgyák, *Ezzé lett a magyar hazátok: A magyar nemzeteszme és nacionalizmus története* (Budapest: Osiris, 2007).

<sup>68</sup> Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary*.

<sup>69</sup> Krisztián Ungváry, *A Horthy-rendszer mérlege: Diszkrimináció, szociálpolitika és antiszemitizmus Magyarországon 1919-1944*, 2nd ed. (Pécs and Budapest: Jelenkor Kiadó, 2013).

crucial element of this tension, since both Vienna and Budapest were despised by antisemites on both the right and left as iniquitous dens of Jewish cosmopolitanism, Jewish capitalism, and Jewish communism. But other axes of conflict mattered equally. Radically conservative, or what Paul Hanebrink calls “neo-conservative,” nationalists presumed that the land and the peasants who farmed it constituted the metaphysical core of the “nation.”<sup>70</sup> It was they, with their folk traditions, down-home values, and old-time religion, who preserved the true content of the national soul against the corruptions of the industrialized, secularized modern world.

The Austrian Social Democrats’ dominance of Viennese municipal politics from 1918 through 1934 gave them the power and resources to experiment in building a progressive, socialist city.<sup>71</sup> The Catholic conservatives, particularly those aligned with the Christian Social party, regarded this “Red Vienna” on a level with the Babylon of Revelation; it was this Vienna that was crushed in the 1934 civil war. In Hungary, where the Social Democrats of the capital were influential but by no means in command, the most visible expression of a rural-versus-urban culture clash was mostly literary – but with strong political implications. The so-called “populist-urbanist debate” (*népi* versus *urbánus*) revolved around the question of whether Hungarian identity ought to spring from the world of the peasantry, or whether a proper Hungarian could also identify with international “urban” culture as well. In part this conflict gave rise to apocalyptic novels of national degradation; it also inspired a new genre called “sociography,” which cataloged the plight of the rural poor in evocative, half-novelistic, half-ethnographic works that proved extremely popular.<sup>72</sup> For the establishment élite, however,

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<sup>70</sup> Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary*, 35.

<sup>71</sup> Helmut Gruber, *Red Vienna: Experiment in Working-Class Culture, 1919-1934* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>72</sup> Deborah S. Cornelius, “The Recreation of the Nation: Origins of the Hungarian Populist Movement,” *Hungarian Studies* 6, no. 1 (1990): 29–40; Tamás Kolosi and Iván Szelényi, “Social Change and Research on Social Structure



populist literature was something to be tolerated at best and tamed if necessary, since its calls for land reform and immediate social action to rescue the peasantry smacked of revolution.

### 1.3 NATIONALISM AND PROCESSES OF IDENTITY

The post-First World War years marked no absolute caesura in the history of east-central European empires, nor did the component parts of the Habsburg monarchy in particular disappear altogether. By the same token, those years did not represent a complete break in the history of nationalism, either. The war had certainly accelerated some of the nation-building projects that had begun in the 19<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>73</sup> but carving nation-states out of the corpses of fallen empires did not mean that the nations that were supposed to be running those states had been built. They were, if anything, vulnerable to the upheavals and population reassignments of the immediate postbellum period. The breakup of the empires had piled on new challenges, not settled the old ones. Thus it is worth asking whether the apparent ubiquity of nationalist discourse in the interwar years did not in fact arise from a fear of weakness, a fear of incompletely formed nations rather than as proof of their Golden Age.

Moreover, the war and its aftermath had a seismic effect on nearly every collective and personal identity imaginable. Europeans from the Atlantic to the Urals were working out their

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in Hungary,” in *Sociology in Europe: In Search of Identity*, ed. Brigitta Nedelmann and Piotr Sztompka (Berlin and New York: W. de Gruyter, 1993), 141–60; Miklós Lackó, “Populism in Hungary: Yesterday and Today,” in *Populism in Eastern Europe: Racism, Nationalism, and Society* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1996), 107–28; László Kósa, ed., *Magyar művelődéstörténet*, 3rd ed. (Budapest: Osiris, 2006), 551–558; Deborah S. Cornelius, “Radical Reformers in a Conservative Age,” in *Emlékkönyv L. Nagy Zsuzsa 80. Születésnapjára*, ed. Zoltán Kovács and Levente Püski (Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetem Történelmi Intézete, 2010), 65–72; Richard S. Esbenshade, “Symbolic Geographies and the Politics of Hungarian Identity in the ‘Populist-Urbanist Debate,’ 1925–44,” *Hungarian Cultural Studies* 7 (2014): 177–97, doi:10.5195/ahca.2014.174.

<sup>73</sup> Tara Zahra, “‘Each Nation Only Cares for Its Own’: Empire, Nation, and Child Welfare Activism in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1918,” *American Historical Review* 111 (December 2006): 1378–1402.

gender, class, urban-versus-rural, sexual, and regional identities (to name a few outstanding categories) in response to the tremendous shocks inflicted by years of continental shakeup. The construction and reconstruction of national identities was dependent on how, when, and where these other identities developed. As deeply important as the contestation of national identity was in post-imperial Austria and Hungary, its centrality has been often overstressed in the historical literature. The Treaty of Trianon had political and cultural ramifications that affected all Hungarians in some way, but this did not mean they spent their waking hours after 1920 staring tearfully at maps of prewar “Greater Hungary,” waiting only for the day when they could march back into Kolozsvár or Kassa (which most of them had never seen and knew little about). Likewise, the perpetually shaky legitimacy of both the First Republic and the *Ständestaat*, coupled with widespread skepticism towards the plausibility of a non-Habsburg “Austrian” identity, inspired the throngs that rapturously welcomed Hitler’s motorcade to Vienna in 1938. But this outcome and the factors contributing to it, true as they may be, should not lead us to fix in our heads an image of the interwar years as a time when Austrians lived in daily confusion over who “they” were. It may have been “normal” for individuals in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries to reflect and act on their senses of national identity, but it was not an automatic consequence of some genetic predisposition. They had, and still have, to be stimulated into behaving “nationally” by discourse and political and economic incentives (or disincentives).

In its conception of identity, this dissertation has been influenced powerfully by the work of Rogers Brubaker. He has argued persuasively for treating identity *not* as a permanent attribute of an individual or group but instead as a momentary practice. He posits that “ethnicity, race, and nation,” for example, “should be conceptualized not as substances or things or entities or organisms or collective individuals... but rather in relational, processual, dynamic, eventful, and

disaggregated terms.”<sup>74</sup> Put another way, identities are best viewed as “practical categories” that help index the world and inform action. They are not, as Brubaker writes elsewhere, “substances” but “interpretive [prisms], [ways] of making sense of the social world,” and can operate simultaneously with each other.<sup>75</sup> He asserts that we should consider nationality, or the group feeling of “nationness,” “as an event, as something that suddenly crystallizes rather than gradually develops.”<sup>76</sup> Thus for Brubaker identity is not only a matter of construction – it is a question of the precise historical moment when an identity is applied.<sup>77</sup> Taking up Brubaker’s proposal, this dissertation intends to show that the close examination of leisure culture reveals national identity to have been but one element in the ceaseless construction of a complex, mutually-affecting range of post-imperial identities.

#### 1.4 TOURISM CULTURES UNDER TRANSFORMATION

The history of leisure opens up rewarding paths to the understanding of identity-formation because leisure is about more than “just” how people spend free time. It arises from the structures that allow for the very idea of “free” time to exist, grant the power to define it, distribute the means to enjoy it, and generate the activities, goods, and meanings that fill its content. In *Time and Money* (1993), Gary Cross demonstrated that leisure is not just something we do when we are not working – it is something we do *instead* of work (that is, earning a

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<sup>74</sup> Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 10–11.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 11; Rogers Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 15.

<sup>76</sup> Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 19.

<sup>77</sup> Brubaker and Fredrick Cooper elsewhere propose an even more radical move to reject the static, passive concept of “identity” for the more active, assertive “identification.” See: Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity,’” *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (2000): 1–47.

wage), and therefore has not arisen “naturally” as the product of capitalist “modernization.”<sup>78</sup> Often enough leisure enjoys guarantees made by legislation, and in some cases it has been gained only through political mobilization. Therefore we cannot take leisure for granted; it is a result of social and political will, and if not a transnational “social decision” quite in the way framed by Cross, at least an accretion of decisions, for leisure must be something considered valuable before it can be denied or granted with the force of law.<sup>79</sup> Going on vacation or going to the cinema may not be an immediately political act, but it still must happen in spaces of time that, at some level, are both politically regulated and socially constructed.

The events and processes investigated in this dissertation unfolded in a period when the concept of leisure in Europe and the United States was in the early stages of a fundamental transformation. In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, European tourism transitioned from the preserve of aristocrats into one of the foremost emblems of bourgeois cultural refinement. The horse-drawn cult of the meandering Grand Tour, whereby young British scions got a first-hand education in Continental cultures both high and low, gave way to a faster, socially-expanded world of steam travel. The railroad’s conquest of space and time<sup>80</sup> laid the foundations of a new tourism-industrial complex whose pillars were the travel agent, the guidebook, and the group tour.<sup>81</sup> Cook’s Tours of Britain pioneered cost-conscious “mass travel” and the Baedeker publishing house in Leipzig sparked a subcultural revolution with its little red books, arming the mobile middle classes with encyclopedic itineraries of “what must be seen” by any self-

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<sup>78</sup> Gary Cross, *Time and Money: The Making of Consumer Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 5. Ellen Furlough also makes exactly this point in Ellen Furlough, “Making Mass Vacations: Tourism and Consumer Culture in France, 1930s to 1970s,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40, no. 2 (April 1998): 247–86.

<sup>79</sup> Cross, *Time and Money*., vii.

<sup>80</sup> Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986).

<sup>81</sup> Rudy Koshar, *German Travel Cultures* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2000), 31.

respecting individual of means and education.<sup>82</sup> By mid-century a culture of spas and alpine resorts had begun to develop in parallel to the growing commercialization of sightseeing. In part this represented a disgusted retreat on behalf of the aristocracy, who wished to distance themselves from the vulgarity of bourgeois vacationing; but it also reflected new attitudes towards medicine, the body, and the environment.<sup>83</sup> Water, whether in the elegant, exclusive bath halls of tucked-away Spa, Marienbad, and Ischl, or at the beaches of great seas and mountain lakes, became a central focus of visitors as well as investors.<sup>84</sup>

Technological innovations at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially the airplane and the automobile, followed soon after by the disruption of the First World War, began to shift the social and economic foundations on which the tourism industry rested. Motorization, taking the form of inexpensive bus lines and private cars, gave greater access to both urban and rural spaces for leisure.<sup>85</sup> Chapters 3 and 5 take up this theme through examinations of the Austrian *Postkraftwagen* (postal bus) system and the fantasy of mobility in the wildly popular film *Meseautó* (Dream Car), respectively.

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<sup>82</sup> On Cook's, see: Lynne Withey, *Grand Tours and Cook's Tours: A History of Leisure Travel, 1750 to 1915* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1997), 135–166. On the hegemony of Baedeker, see: Koshar, *German Travel Cultures*, 19–64 and Jan Palmowski, "Travels with Baedeker: The Guidebook and the Middle Classes in Victorian and Edwardian Britain," in *Histories of Leisure*, ed. Rudy Koshar (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2002), 105–30.

<sup>83</sup> Jill Steward, "Travel to the Spas: The Growth of Health Tourism in Central Europe, 1850-1914," in *Journeys into Madness: Mapping Mental Illness in the Austro-Hungarian Empire*, ed. Gemma Blackshaw and Sabine Wieber (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2012), 72–89; Alison Frank, "The Air Cure Town: Commodifying Mountain Air in Alpine Central Europe," *Central European History* 45, no. 2 (2012): 185–207.

<sup>84</sup> Lena Lenček and Gideon Bosker, *The Beach: The History of Paradise on Earth* (New York: Viking, 1998); Douglas Peter Mackaman, *Leisure Settings: Bourgeois Culture, Medicine, and the Spa in Modern France* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998); László Kósa, *Fürdőélet a monarchiában* (Budapest: Holnap Kiadó, 1999); Renate Basch-Ritter, *Die k.u.k. Riviera: Nostalgische Erinnerungen an die altösterreichischen Küstenländer, an idyllische Seebäder und mondänes Strandleben, an die Winterstationen und Sommerparadise an der Adria* (Vienna: Pichler Verlag, 2002); Susan C. Anderson and Bruce H. Tabb, eds., *Water, Leisure and Culture: European Historical Perspectives* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2002); Mirjam Zadoff, *Next Year in Marienbad: The Lost Worlds of Jewish Spa Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Ian Bradley, *Water Music: Music Making in the Spas of Europe and North America* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); David Clay Large, *The Grand Spas of Central Europe: A History of Intrigue, Politics, Art, and Healing* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

<sup>85</sup> Bernd Kreuzer, "Straßen Für Den Fremdenverkehr: Das Salzkammergut Zwischen Den Weltkriegen," *Oberösterreichische Heimatblätter* 53, no. 3/4 (1999): 195–211.

No less important than the expansion of the means of transportation, however, was the enlarged role of the state in determining the meaning of leisure in society. After 1918, workers across Europe exerted increasing pressure on their governments for reduced labor hours.<sup>86</sup> In Austria and Hungary, concessions for time off, both paid and unpaid, tended to benefit white-collar employees far more than industrial or agricultural workers. It was they who were usually the presumed subjects of tracts like Hungarian biologist Harald Tangl's 1938 *Weekend, Pihenés, Nyaralás* (Weekend, Relaxation, Summer Vacation), which declared that the "sensitive brain cells" of office clerks wore out more quickly than the hardy muscles of the proletariat.<sup>87</sup> Lobbying for more leisure did yield results, though, however unevenly they fell: the general 40-hour week came on the books in Austria in 1919; in Hungary, it was not until 1937 that a 44-hour week became law.<sup>88</sup> Weekends, even when they lasted from Saturday afternoon until Monday morning, combined with buses, cars, and cheap train tickets to give more and more people a chance to travel.

More dramatic still were the changes wrought by the rise of interventionist states and their reactions to the Great Depression after 1929. As Mark Mazower has noted, interwar Europe was defined to a considerable degree by the "tensions and stresses of an insecure world in which nation-states existed in rivalry with one another, their populations decimated by one war and threatened by the prospect of another."<sup>89</sup> The bodies of individuals were precious national resources; they needed their health preserved and their strength enhanced. The promotion of tourism, closely associated with sport, was one way of ensuring this. In addition to biopolitics,

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<sup>86</sup> This story, as it played out in the United Kingdom, France, and the United States, is the central theme of Cross, *Time and Money*.

<sup>87</sup> Harald Tangl, *Weekend, pihenés, nyaralás* (Budapest: Franklin Kiadó, 1938), 445.

<sup>88</sup> Gruber, *Red Vienna*, 116; László Blatniczky, "A munkások szabadideje," in *A gyáripari munkavállalók szabadideje: a balatonkenesei szabadidőtanfolyamon elhangzott előadások*, ed. András Fluck (Budapest: Magyar Gyáriparosok Országos Szövetsége, 1940), 10.

<sup>89</sup> Mazower, *Dark Continent*, 77.

moreover, tourism offered the nation-state, in the words of Eric G.E. Zuelow, other “[tools] for mastering the masses”: the “opportunity to teach citizens about the nation, its landscapes, and culture,” a way to “showcase” the modern infrastructural achievements of the state, and a means of economic development.<sup>90</sup> The most powerful examples of vigorous state-sponsored leisure in this period are the pioneering fascist programs, *Dopolavoro* (After Work) in Mussolini’s Italy and *Kraft durch Freude* (Strength through Joy) in Hitler’s Germany, both of which inspired much less ambitious emulations in Hungary and Austria.<sup>91</sup> The “tools” that Zuelow names will appear time and again throughout the research presented here. But it is one of the contentions of this thesis that while the nation-state and its proponents did indeed harness tourism for enthusiastically nationalist purposes, the fact of those efforts should not be confused with their true results. As Chapters 3 and 4 will illustrate, the nation-state and the demands of the nationalist ethos struggled mightily against other forces, especially economic self-interest, regional identities, and the legacy of the Habsburg world.

## 1.5 SOURCES AND THEIR AGENTS

The bulk of the printed-media primary sources used in this dissertation are artifacts of the tourism industry in Austria, Hungary, and elsewhere. Many of these are periodicals, pamphlets, monographs, and guidebooks produced for consumption by travelers, usually with the intent to

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<sup>90</sup> Eric G.E. Zuelow, *A History of Modern Tourism* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 135.

<sup>91</sup> Victoria de Grazia, *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organization of Leisure in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Hasso Spode, “Fordism, Mass Tourism and the Third Reich: The ‘Strength through Joy’ Seaside Resort as an Index Fossil,” *Journal of Social History* 38, no. 1 (2004): 127–55; Shelley Baranowski, *Strength through Joy: Consumerism and Mass Tourism in the Third Reich* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

advertise, advise, or, just as often, do a bit of both. These publications come from a variety of outlets, particularly from bodies with a vested interest in profitability: tourism bureaus run by municipal, provincial, or national governments; state transportation corporations, such as the Hungarian State Railways (Magyar Állami Vasutak) or the Austrian Travel Bureau (Österreichischen Verkehrsbureau); trade organizations formed among travel agencies, spa directors, hotel operators, restaurateurs, and other enterprises with a direct stake in the tourism business. Their motivations are usually quite obvious. Numerous other publications and authors, however, worked to promote tourism without capitalist aims clearly in mind. Their purpose was not so much to drum up commerce as it was to put forward tourism as a means to an end: education, the betterment of society, the inculcation of national or local patriotisms, and other objectives for which making money was, if not exactly irrelevant, arguably not a principal concern. In this camp we find journalists, academics, bureaucrats, and others who, in addition to possibly being particularly keen tourists, took it upon themselves to extol the virtues of a healthy national tourist economy.

Because these authors' works form the empirical basis for the narratives and analyses that comprise the following chapters, they are the primary historical agents of this dissertation. But while it is possible to suppose without fear of inaccuracy that the majority of these actors were male members of an educated élite, their motivations, allegiances, and precise positions in society were diverse. What they had in common, and the main reason that their works are consulted here, was their determination to speak in favor of tourism. Consequently, this dissertation uses the term "tourism promoters" as a catch-all, shorthand way of collectively describing these agents. The criteria for inclusion into this "group" are simply that a given individual (or the text he/she produced) worked within the tourism industry, and therefore



exercised a logical interest in promoting business or spoke in favorable terms of the need to improve tourist activity and/or discussed the importance/consequences of tourism in a way that sought to promote it. Other facts about the identities, offices, or intentions of these authors will appear as necessary.

Furthermore, this dissertation strives as far as practical to avoid the use of anachronistic analytical terms to describe historical phenomena (that is, words in currency mainly among 21<sup>st</sup> century historians) where it is possible to relay meaningfully the vocabulary used in the sources. The goal of this study is not to try to fit its findings into a particular explanatory framework – although this is always to some extent inevitable – but rather to take seriously how the historical agents in question attempted to explain the world around them. In Chapter 4, for instance, the term “modernization” is consciously avoided when discussing what the actors themselves called “civilization” or “development.” This choice is predicated on a conviction that such practices better enable us to pull apart the composite threads of the conceptual fabric – and sometimes, indeed, the conceptual tangles – that historical actors draped over their world. The aim is not to interpret the actors’ concepts according to latter-day ideological dictionaries, but to translate them as faithfully as possible according to what the actors themselves seemed anxious to express.

## **1.6 UNITED POWERS: TOURISM AND MOVIE-GOING AS TWO PARTS OF THE SAME HISTORY OF LEISURE**

It might seem, at first, that tourism and movie-going make an odd pairing as the leisure activities of interest in this study. Yet they were (and are) in fact quite complimentary. The age of mass

tourism had only begun to dawn over Austria and Hungary in the years between the two world wars. It would not arrive in earnest until regime change, rapid industrialization, urbanization, and the triumph of the automobile combined after 1945 to make traveling for pleasure a plausible expectation for the laboring many and not only the leisured few. But what millions of east-central Europeans were unlikely to access in person was available to them, in a highly idealized form, on the screen of their local movie theater. This surface had the potential to serve as the train cabin window or the mountain panorama most Austrians and Hungarians could afford only rarely, if at all. Through the mechanics of their camerawork, the turns of their plots, and the cloud of auxiliary print-media that buzzed around them, films converted the traveler who had to stay put into a virtual tourist. Indeed, the connection between tourism and movies was so frequent and so symbiotic that it would be impossible to write a complete history of the one without the other. The motto of Franz Joseph I (and therefore, in a sense, of the entire monarchy) was *viribus unitis*, “with united powers,” an optimistic reference to his role as the binding agent of his many realms; it also would have been a fitting choice for a hypothetical trade organization allying the tourism industry and the film industry in central Europe.

The potential traffic of cinematic virtual tourists in Austria and Hungary far exceeded that of their actually-traveling counterparts. Movie-going was one of the most participated-in forms of leisure throughout the interwar years. In the mid-1920s, tens, even hundreds, of thousands of viewers could be expected to visit Viennese movie houses on a given day.<sup>92</sup> According to Ignác Romsics, “the Hungarian population spent roughly the same amount of

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<sup>92</sup> There is some uncertainty about exactly how many patrons attended Viennese cinemas each day, since ticket sales were highest on the weekends and fell off during the workweek. One source quoted in Werner Michael Schwarz, *Kino und Kinos in Wien: Eine Entwicklungsgeschichte bis 1934* (Vienna: Turia + Kant, 1992), 41, suggests that as many as 140,000 total viewers might visit movie theaters on a single day; cf. Gruber, *Red Vienna*, 127, which calculates that the average daily number in 1926 was around 34,120, derived from 238,846 per week.

money on cinema tickets... as they did on all printed matter, newspapers, books and almanacs together.”<sup>93</sup>

For those with little disposable income, traveling to the neighborhood cinema remained a more affordable trip than taking a vacation out-of-town with even the cheapest forms of transportation. It offered a surrogate experience for actual travel. The camera could, in effect, stand in for the seated viewer, who later saw the recordings made through its “eye.” With further editing, the film could be structured in such a way that the viewer was invited to identify with the perspectives of traveling characters. The viewer not only beheld a photographic representation of the sights (and with them eventually, sounds) accessible to actual tourists, but could insert themselves psychologically into the action.

John Urry’s theory of the Tourist Gaze is helpful for placing cinematic vision alongside the other means by which non-travelers could experience travel secondhand. Urry maintains that the Gaze, or the fundamental mode of perception a tourist employs, rests upon a “basic binary division between the ordinary/everyday and the extraordinary.”<sup>94</sup> The division is created and maintained by encounters with difference, or by encountering something unfamiliar in the mundane, something mundane performed in an “unusual context,” or something familiar done in an “unusual visual environment.”<sup>95</sup> A set of structures then arouse the Gaze with “anticipation” and train it what to see. For Urry, these structures are primarily the mass media and the discourses of “tourist professionals,” both of which transmit collections of signs that are understood, or come to be understood, as conventional representations of an unfamiliar place or culture. These structures continue to shape the experience long after the trip because the Gaze,

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<sup>93</sup> Ignác Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century* (Budapest: Corvina, 1999), 178.

<sup>94</sup> John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2002), 12.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 12–13.

more active and sensitive than at home, can be preserved in postcards and souvenir images.<sup>96</sup> From the start, therefore, tourism is an activity surrounded by preconceived images and expectations arising from encounters with various media.<sup>97</sup> It follows, then, that one need not physically travel to gain knowledge of how tourists behave or what their destinations are like.

This conclusion would not have been surprising to movie-goers in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the winter of 1923-1924, the journal *Wiener Kino* held a contest that asked its readers to submit their answers to the question, “Why do I go to the movies?” The best answer, as judged by a panel of journalists and film industry personalities (including Béla Balázs, who went on to become one of the most important early cinema theorists), was to receive a top prize of one million Kronen. The 103 published answers present a fascinating, diverse array of personal confessions, laudations to movie-going, musings on the medium of film, and attempts to impress the jury. In the composite image formed by these entries, the cinema stands in opposition to daily reality: a comforting, elevating, thrilling, and enlightening world apart. And yet it could also improve upon reality by offering the viewer practical lessons in social behavior, or substitute it with relatively inexpensive sensory experiences that would be otherwise unattainable. A number of the entries suggest that some enthusiasts went to the pictures as a way of journeying to distant and unfamiliar places.<sup>98</sup> So wrote one contestant under the cipher “Reichhelm”: “The cinema is

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>97</sup> Tom Gunning goes even further in arguing that “in the modern era the very concept of travel becomes intricately bound up with the production of images. The image becomes our way of structuring a journey and even provides a substitute for it. Travel becomes a means of appropriating the world through images.” Tom Gunning, “‘The Whole World within Reach’: Travel Images without Borders,” in *Virtual Voyages: Cinema and Travel*, ed. Jeffrey Ruoff (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 27.

<sup>98</sup> These citations all derive from *Wiener Kino* and mark the number of the entry and the name/pseudonym of the contestant, followed by the issue in which the entry appears: Nr.1, K. Fehér, Vol. 1 (1923), No. 3: 2; Nr.26, Friedl, Vol. 2 (1924), No.3: 8; Nr. 38, K.M., Vol. 2, No. 4: 3.; Nr. 40, “Lilly O.”, *ibid.*; Nr. 41, Hilla Urban, *ibid.*; Nr. 49, Tierer Julius, *ibid.*; Nr. 59, Johann Schovcsik, Vol. 2, No. 4; Nr. 61, Lilly F., Vol. 2, No. 5: 8; Nr. 63, Sehnsucht, *ibid.*; Nr. 65, Ida Laube, *ibid.*; Nr. 67, Caroline Zauchinger, *ibid.*; Nr. 83, Lebenssucher, Vol. 2, No. 6: 8; Nr. 90, M.B., Fischamend, Vol. 2, No. 7: 8; Nr. 95, Franz Staffel, Vol. 2, No. 8: 7; Nr. 96, F. Sigmund, *ibid.*; Nr. 101, Georg Schütze, *ibid.* It is worth noting that Nr. 63 (Sehnsucht) and Nr. 90 (M.B., Fischamend) were awarded the

that place where, in no time at all, I can forget every misery of this world. It is an unspeakable pleasure for me to be able to behold, vividly and for only a little money, far-flung countries and cities that without the cinema I would never have the opportunity to see.”<sup>99</sup>

Moviegoers like “Reichhelm” and his fellow contestants were certainly not the first to enjoy their pastime this way, for the history of cinema has always been bound up in the history of travel. The invention of the steam engine profoundly changed how people could travel, but it also changed the psychology and cultural understanding of vision. Drawing on Wolfgang Schivelbusch’s study of the impact of railway travel on modern culture, film scholars have suggested that “panoramic vision” – the new way of seeing the world created by the combination of unprecedented velocity and the restricted perspective of the carriage window – was a direct antecedent of cinematic vision, through which the viewer sees a flattened, moving world while themselves remaining stationary.<sup>100</sup>

Once invented, cinematic vision turned immediately towards capturing the experience of traveling. From its earliest days, the motion picture lured audiences with the thrill of getting to see images of distant places reproduced before their eyes. The promise of excitement at the transporting possibilities of sheer visual display rather than narrative action was a basic component of early film. This is what, in his now-classic essay, Tom Gunning describes this realm as the “cinema of attractions.”

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contest’s second (300,000 Kronen) and third (200,000 Kronen) prizes, respectively. See: *Wiener Kino*, Vol. 2, No. 11: 7.

<sup>99</sup> Nr. 69, Reichhelm, *Wiener Kino*, Vol. 2, No. 5 (January 1924): 8.

<sup>100</sup> Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century*, 59–60. Later studies which see “panoramic vision” as the parent of cinematic vision include: Lynne Kirby, *Parallel Tracks: The Railroad and Silent Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 58–59; Orvar Löfgren, *On Holiday: A History of Vacationing* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1999), 44–47; Daniel Morat, “Das Kino,” in *Orte der Moderne: Erfahrungswelten des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Alexa Geisthövel and Habbo Knoch (Frankfurt and New York: Campus Verlag, 2005), 234; Gunning, “The Whole World within Reach,” 37.

The cinema of attractions directly solicits spectator attention, inciting visual curiosity, and supplying pleasure through an exciting spectacle – a unique event, whether fictional or documentary, that is of interest in itself. [...] It is the direct address of the audience, in which an attraction is offered to the spectator by a cinema showman, that defines this approach to film making. Theatrical display dominates over narrative absorption, emphasizing the direct stimulation of shock or surprise at the expense of unfolding a story or creating a diegetic universe. The cinema of attractions expends little energy creating characters with psychological motivations or individual personality. Making use of both fictional and non-fictional attractions, its energy moves outward towards an acknowledged spectator rather than inward towards the character-based situations essential to classical narrative.<sup>101</sup>

Movies depicting travel, especially travel on rails, were numerous and popular even when they consisted of little more than “clips” of a journey viewed through a camera mounted somewhere in or on a moving vehicle.<sup>102</sup> Indeed, the topography of film presentation itself reflected a close association with travel. Some of Vienna’s and Berlin’s earliest cinemas were opened as sections of luxury hotels or situated near train stations along main transportation routes.<sup>103</sup>

The tight connections between tourism and cinema did not necessarily begin or end at the door of the auditorium. Pop-culture magazines like Vienna’s *Mein Film* and Budapest’s *Délibáb*

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<sup>101</sup> Tom Gunning, “The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde,” in *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser (London: British Film Institute, 1990), 56–62; quotation from 58–59.

<sup>102</sup> According to Lynne Kirby, the Vitagraph Company’s catalog from 1903 indicates that out of at least 2,500 films made between 1896 and 1902, “several hundred were travel or scenic films.” Kirby, *Parallel Tracks*, 20–21.

<sup>103</sup> Morat, “Das Kino,” 230; Schwarz, *Kino und Kinos in Wien: Eine Entwicklungsgeschichte bis 1934*, 71 and 100.

told perpetually of film stars flitting here or there across the continent (and if they were lucky, across the ocean to Hollywood – and beyond), whether on business or pleasure. Readers of *Mein Film* in 1935 could learn, for example, of the actor Oskar Karlweis's upcoming tour through Yugoslavia, Romania, Poland, and Czechoslovakia while he also regaled them with some episodes from his travels in the Far East; they heard from singer-actor Joseph Schmidt in 1937 that "America is Fabulous – and Most of All the American Women!"<sup>104</sup> There seems to have been a certain interest in portraying stars as overworked and desperate for leisure, which they often satisfied through tourism. Even when the stars' destinations were much closer to home, the periodical's fascination with their free time and relaxation remained undiminished. "Speak with me about whatever you like, speak with me about traveling, about going swimming, about dancing and eating – if you want – just not about work!" pleaded Liane Haid in a 1934 interview. Her desire for recreation was richly illustrated by an accompanying collage of private photographs from recent vacations to Sicily and the Austrian countryside.<sup>105</sup> In this way, movies brought together dreams of physical mobility with fantasies of social mobility. The ability to be a real tourist already implied that one had a quantum of leisure time and money to spend on travel; refracted through the camera lens, it was but a small distance towards exalting it as a natural part of the lifestyle of the rich and famous. The same tropes and techniques that vacation movies used to project images of place and tourist behavior were used, simultaneously and even more illusorily, to lift the viewer to a higher rung on the social ladder.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> "Einpacken – Auspacken: Oskar Karlweis geht auf Tournee," *Mein Film*, no. 480 (1935): 5-6; "Joseph Schmidt sagt: Amerika ist fabelhaft – und erst die Amerikanerinnen!," *Mein Film*, no. 610 (1937): 4.

<sup>105</sup> "Die Diva auf Urlaub: Liane Haid ganz privat in Wien," *Mein Film*, no. 420 (1934): 5.

<sup>106</sup> For Frankfurt School critic Siegfried Kracauer, this function of popular cinema was an inevitable outcome of its being produced by the bourgeoisie in a capitalist society. The effect was pure illusion and little more than cynical wish fulfillment. "[...] Stupid and unreal film fantasies are the *daydreams of society*, in which its actual reality comes to the fore and its otherwise repressed wishes take on form. [...] In order to investigate today's society, one must listen to the products of its film industries. They are all blabbing a rude secret, without really wanting to. In the

## 1.7 THE CONSTRUCTION OF POST-IMPERIAL PLACES AND IDENTITIES

The following study examines two intertwined processes. The first of these comprises the ways in which Austrians and Hungarians made sense of what “home” was – and the nature of the people living there – now that it was no longer a part of the Habsburg dynastic realm. In his 1935 “The Bust of the Emperor,” Joseph Roth grieved for the disappearance of the monarchy through the novella’s protagonist, Count Xavier Morstin. Upon returning to his estate in the erstwhile province of Galicia, Morstin is suddenly confronted by the question of where, exactly, it was that he had come back to. He concludes (as did Roth) that although the village and its environs had not changed, the new political circumstances had replaced his real homeland with someplace alien.

It was winter, one could feel Christmas was not far off. Just as it always was at this time, as it had been long before the war, the Lopatinka was frozen, the rooks squatted motionless on the bare chestnuts, and the steady easterly gale blew over the fields against the west-facing windows of the house. The village (a consequence of the war) was full of widows and orphans: enough material for the charity of the returning lord. But instead of greeting Lopatyny as home once more, Count Morstin threw himself into difficult and unhelpful speculation on the question of what was home. Since this village, he thought, now belongs to Poland and not Austria, can it still be said to be my home? What is home,

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endless sequence of films, a limited number of typical themes recur again and again; they reveal how society wants to see itself.” Siegfried Kracauer, “The Little Shopgirls Go to the Movies,” in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1995), 291–294.



anyway? Are not the particular uniforms of the customs men and the gendarmes that we are used to seeing our childhood, are they not just as much home as the pines and firs, the swamp and the meadow, the cloud and the stream? If the excise-men and the police are different, and the pine and the fir and the stream and the swamp are the same, is that still home to me? Was I not—the Count proceeded to interrogate himself—so much at home in this place because it belonged to a master who owned just as many different places that I loved as well? No doubt about it! The unnatural excess of world history also ruined my personal pleasure in what I called home. How, everywhere around me they speak of their new fatherland. And they think of me as *déraciné*. I always have been. Oh, there once was a fatherland, a real one, which is to say one for orphaned nationals, the only possible fatherland! And that was the old monarchy. Now I am a homeless man who has lost the true home of the eternal wanderer.<sup>107</sup>

The great majority of former Habsburg subjects probably would not have empathized with Morstin's sense of utter homelessness without the monarchy, although many Cisleithanian Jews almost certainly did. Even so, everyone's home had been altered to some degree. The continent-wide experience of losing family members and friends to the war meant that (on a personal level) the members and (on an objective one) demographic compositions of post-imperial communities were painfully different than in 1914.

Most people now lived in a state with a different name; all of them lived in a state with some kind of new government. Those who were held, or held themselves, to be of a nationality different from the one celebrated by the state they now lived in were suddenly members of new

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<sup>107</sup> Joseph Roth, "The Bust of the Emperor," in *The Collected Stories of Joseph Roth*, trans. Michael Hoffmann (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), 235.

“national minorities.”<sup>108</sup> The mosaic of nation-states that comprised east-central and southeastern Europe placed new limitations on their inhabitants’ mental geographies: the horizons of their new national worlds had gotten smaller and less grand. The Successor States had unfamiliar new shapes; none approached the size of the old monarchy and none could be considered more than a second-tier European power. The war and its consequences had not only moved borders around people, but had moved people around as well. Vienna became a destination for millions of refugees with the invasion of the east in the first months of the war and continued to attract them until well after the formal warfare had stopped.<sup>109</sup> Hungary’s occupation and subsequent annexation of Transylvania, Upper Hungary (Slovakia), and the Banat had a similar effect on Budapest, where hundreds of thousands of mostly middle-class and aristocratic Hungarian-speakers had fled in fear of retaliatory persecution.<sup>110</sup>

In Austria and Hungary, as elsewhere, these turbulent circumstances prompted new reflections on people’s relationships to the villages, cities, provinces, regions, and countries in which they now lived. Tourism, both as an industry to be promoted and an activity to be experienced, was thoroughly enmeshed in the determination of those relationships. Tourism promoters before and after the war were instrumental in constructing “Austria” and “Hungary,” along with their landscapes and cities, as places. For the businessmen and publicists who sought to lure foreign tourists to Austria and Hungary in the 1920s and 1930s, this process was to a great extent one of trying to define the national “self.” Through their multifarious advertising strategies – which included posters, magazines, films, guidebooks and radio broadcasts – they

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<sup>108</sup> On the evolution of the concept of ethnic and racial minorities in Europe between 1815 and 1919, see: Eric D. Weitz, “From the Vienna to the Paris System: International Politics and the Entangled Histories of Human Rights, Forced Deportations, and Civilizing Missions,” *American Historical Review* 113, no. 5 (December 2008): 1313–43.

<sup>109</sup> Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>110</sup> István Mócsy, *The Effects of World War I: The Uprooted* (New York: Social Science Monographs, 1983).

developed a vocabulary of symbols to illuminate the facets of so-called “national characters.” The images promoters created were often styled with foreign audiences in mind, but they were in fact deployed to inspire domestic tourists as well. As a result, it is often not possible to distinguish between specifically national constructions of “home” from the ones designed for international consumption.

Historians have found these artifacts very fruitful for understanding the challenge of constructing national identities in two post-imperial countries seemingly racked by contradictions and fractures. In the political and cultural debates of the era, both Austrian and Hungarian society appeared to suffer from a rift between the modern and the traditional, between urban and rural. (It could be said that Karl Kraus’s oft-quoted proclamation of “two Austrias,” one in the industrial cities and another in the countryside, had its Hungarian analogue in the *népi* [folk] vs. *urbánus* [urban] clashes in the 1930s.) To be successful, promoters had to strike an overall balance between these two elements, emphasizing one over the other at different occasions. Zsolt Nagy has argued that Hungarian tourism promoters developed a vocabulary of three distinct landscapes – cosmopolitan, modern Budapest; the exotic, eternal Great Plain; and the rest of the country, which lay conceptually somewhere in between – to articulate what the idea of “Hungary” ought to symbolize.<sup>111</sup> Márta Juszti offers yet a fourth emblem, that of tourism in Hungary as the “bridge” between East and West, and the country an indispensable (and non-threatening) concourse for friendly interaction in the “heart of Europe.”<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> I am grateful to Zsolt Nagy for sharing his dissertation with me while preparing to publish it as a monograph. Zsolt Nagy, “Grand Delusions: Interwar Hungarian Cultural Diplomacy, 1918-1941” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2012), 247–249.

<sup>112</sup> Márta Juszti, “Az idegenforgalom híd szerepének szempontjai a két világháború közötti magyar szaksajtóban,” in *Tudományos évkönyv* (Budapest: Budapesti Gazdasági Főiskola, 2002), 267–73.

Strong regional identities added an additional dimension to the Austrian case, where it was even more difficult to fuse an amalgam into a single representation. The solution, as Corinna Peniston-Bird has found, was to project apparent disunity as “glorious diversity,” through which Austria could offer something to anyone.<sup>113</sup> At the same time, though, it was precisely the attendant “flattening” of the complicated, competing images of Austria into stereotypes that, Peniston-Bird contends, made tourism propaganda a space uniquely capable of providing Austrians a consistent model of what it meant to be Austrian. “Above all, tourism proved that it was possible to identify an Austrian identity, of which its inhabitants could be proud” by supplying certain ingredients necessary to a national identity: “a sense of territory, a cultural identity, a national character, an awareness that constituent elements were nonetheless part of a whole.”<sup>114</sup>

Movie-going was an enormously important, if as yet understudied, platform for the construction of place and touristic images of local, regional, and national identity. As movie-making developed beyond its sideshow- and café-spectacle origins into an increasingly commercialized, industrialized, and, not least of all, narrative form of art, the evolution from “cinema of attractions” to storytelling allowed tourism to grow into a mainstay of plot devices and settings. The cinematic tools for constructing place ranged from individual allusions or synecdoche (e.g. playing Strauss’s “Blue Danube Waltz” to invoke the idea of Vienna, or displaying a shot of the Hungarian Parliament building to establish that the setting has moved to

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<sup>113</sup> Corinna Peniston-Bird, “Coffee, Klimt, and Climbing: Constructing an Austrian National Identity in Tourist Literature, 1918-38,” in *Histories of Tourism: Representation, Identity and Conflict*, ed. John K. Walton (Clevedon, Buffalo, and Toronto: Channel View Publications, 2005), 164. See also: Gernot Heiss, “Tourismus,” in *Memoria Austriae I: Menschen, Mythen, Zeiten* (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 2004), 330–56; Christian Maryška and Michaela Pfundner, eds., *Willkommen in Österreich: Eine sommerliche Reise in Bildern* (Wien: Metroverlag, 2012).

<sup>114</sup> C.M. Peniston-Bird, “The Debate on Austrian National Identity in the First Republic (1918-1938)” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of St. Andrews, 1997), 397–398.

Budapest); to montages that assemble a group of famous landmarks or other images meant to “narrate” a place more thoroughly; to participation in more elaborate discourses that may or may not be more politically charged (e.g. attempting to claim a certain identity for Vienna as a musical “capital of world culture” or Budapest as the “spa capital” of Europe).<sup>115</sup>

By the 1930s, movie houses suffered from no shortage of films that featured tourism in some way. There were entire unarticulated subgenres dedicated to hotels, ocean liners, and trains, very often as the settings for crime dramas or comedies of errors.<sup>116</sup> Numerous other movies seem to have been called into being as little more than excuses to run formulaic storylines around glamorous or photogenic places. Crisp landscape photography was, often enough in the eyes of reviewers, one of a given film’s best attributes. For example, Vienna’s *Paimanns Filmlisten* praised the camerawork in Géza von Bolváry’s ski-slope romance *Winternachtstraum* [A Winter Night’s Dream] (Germany, 1935), which was set against the Bavarian Alps in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, commenting that “the gorgeous winter landscape is naturally but a pretty frame and backdrop for the plot.”<sup>117</sup> The newspaper gave a similarly favorable assessment of *Konzert in Tirol* [Concert in Tyrol] (Austria, 1938), a folksier variation on the same theme, as a complete tourist package: “The director organically incorporates singing, folk customs, and sporting activities; the dialogue is spoken intelligibly with a moderate dialect. Pretty landscape shots (East Tyrol), appropriate interiors, and the photography and

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<sup>115</sup> See, for instance: Roman Horak and Siegfried Mattl, “‘Musik liegt in der Luft...’: Die ‘Weltkulturhauptstadt Wien.’ Eine Konstruktion,” in *Stadt. Masse. Raum: Wiener Studien zur Archäologie des Popularen*, ed. Roman Horak et al. (Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2001), 164–239; Márta Juszti, “‘Utazgassunk hazánk földjén!’: A belföldi turizmus problémái a két világháború között Magyarországon,” *Korall* 26 (2006): 185–208.

<sup>116</sup> There is a very brief discussion of modes of transportation as cinematic crime scenes in Jenő Király and Gyöngyi Balogh, “*Csak egy nap a világ...*”: *A magyar műfaj- és stílustörténete, 1929-1936* (Budapest: Magyar Filmintézet, 2000), 115–117.

<sup>117</sup> *Der gute Film*, No. 116 (March 1, 1935): 5; *Paimanns Filmlisten*, No. 986 (March 1, 1935): 26.

soundtrack are equally clear.”<sup>118</sup> Moviegoer Imre Herczeg of Budapest, who apparently was also inclined toward the slopes, opined in Budapest’s *Délibáb* that the best features of *Zigeunerblut* [Gypsy Blood] (Germany, 1935) were “the shots of Kitzbühel” (a picturesque ski resort in Tyrol) and “my movie date.” “Fewer actors and more winter scenes would have been more useful,” he concluded.<sup>119</sup>

Feature films of the 1930s capitalized on the fact that the cinema of attractions remained an essential, if now submerged, part of the moviegoing experience. At the same time as they tried to satisfy the thrill of seeing something exotic, however, such movies could not invent their settings entirely at random; they appealed to the excitement of recognizing a particular place and its charms. They helped construct a sense of place around certain tourist destinations, the aura of “here and nowhere else,” more often than not by recycling pre-existing images and discourses on what characteristics or contents made a specific space or spaces unique. “Images of foreign lands took on a more tangible quality when audiences knew it was possible to travel them,” writes Tom Gunning, “even if they did not undertake the journey themselves.”<sup>120</sup> For the Austrian or Hungarian virtual traveler, though, the land did not necessarily have to be outside the borders of the nation-state to be sufficiently “foreign.” The countryside could be strange for the urbanite, the metropolis a baffling new country for the provincial.

In all things, however, a sense of “authenticity” was unequivocally required when portraying places onscreen. In this respect, film critics sometimes took it upon themselves to police the “correct” cinematic constructions of place. Reviewers were unforgiving when it came to judging shoddy or flat-out inaccurate onscreen portrayals of their hometown. The Vienna-

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<sup>118</sup> *Paimanns Filmlisten*, No. 1144 (March 11, 1938), 29.

<sup>119</sup> *Délibáb* 9, no. 18 (April 27, 1935): 64.

<sup>120</sup> Gunning, “The Whole World within Reach,” 27.

based *Der gute Film* dryly panned the 1934 German feature *Ein Mädel aus Wien* (A Girl from Vienna) for its blatant attempt to pass off location shots of Berlin for the Austrian capital.<sup>121</sup> The journal took to task the British-made *Heart's Desire* (1936), a vehicle for the Vienna-born international vocal sensation Richard Tauber, for its lazy perpetuation of postcard clichés. “For us, the style – to present, yet again, the Viennese and *Heuriger* [wine-tavern] milieux according to the customarily inaccurate notions hailing from abroad – is at least a bit strange, if not downright unpleasant.”<sup>122</sup> It attacked domestic films no less vigorously than foreign ones, as displayed in its commentary on the Austrian *Prater* (1936).

There are titles that rouse expectations. One such title is *Prater*. Namely, one expects from such a film not only the *Riesenrad*, the Ghost Train, and the rollercoaster, but also the personalities and the people of the Prater, both good and bad, as exist everywhere. But what does this film offer? Cheap sensationalism of the worst kind, without authenticity or humor. [...] Nothing is gained from the distorted picture of Vienna and the Viennese offered by this artistically deficient film. Austrian movies of this kind are better left unfilmed.<sup>123</sup>

Weighing in on the ability of *Sehnsucht nach Wien* [A Longing for Vienna] (Germany, 1933) to reproduce the charm of its setting, *Paimanns Filmlisten* stated simply: “Sehnsucht nach

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<sup>121</sup> “Why the film is called ‘Girl from Vienna’ remains unclear, as we find in this Vienna the Reichskanzlerplatz, the Gedächtniskirche, and the Berliner Hochschule für Musik.” *Der gute Film*, No. 89/90 (September 7, 1934).

<sup>122</sup> *Der gute Film*, No. 210 (June 6, 1937): 15.

<sup>123</sup> *Der gute Film*, No. 189/190 (September 15, 1936): 12.

Wien gibt es in dem Film keine.” (“There is no longing for Vienna in this film” – though it sounds in German more like the insult it was meant to be.)<sup>124</sup>

Behind the glossy pictures of alpine maidens, *pushta* cowboys, and romantic cities, complex dynamics were at work. In their endeavor to package “Austria” or “Hungary” as attractive commodities, tourism promoters struggled to define who it was, precisely, that they were marketing them to. As will be explored in Chapter 2, the very vocabulary of the tourism industry at this time blurred the lines between domestic and international tourists. Both were denoted, ambiguously, by the word “stranger” (German: *der Fremde*; Hungarian: *az idegen*), leaving uncertain (at least on paper) the relationships among the imagined Tourist, his/her “home” nation, and the place he/she was visiting. The chapter reveals ways that the quest to lure the “stranger” on one hand sustained and on the other relied upon certain habits laid down during imperial times: relatively high volumes of cross-border traffic between Austria and Hungary, the symbiotic rivalry of Budapest versus Vienna, and attempts to rekindle Habsburg-era “friendship” between Austrians and Hungarians. German geopolitical antagonism, in tandem with Engelbert Dollfuss’s suppression of democracy in Austria and Gyula Gömbös’s abortive attempts to mold the Hungarian government into a fascist dictatorship, created political conditions in which the Austrian and Hungarian tourism industries mattered more to each other than at any point since the demise of the Dual Monarchy. Consequently, for a brief period between 1933 and 1938, promoters on either side of the border spoke of Austrians and Hungarians in chummy terms as good neighbors and longtime pals. Here the film *Címzett ismeretlen* [Address Unknown] (1935) features as an illustration of this newfound era of Austro-Hungarian good-feeling. The chapter concludes with a comparison of the ways that Austrian and Hungarian tourism promoters

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<sup>124</sup> *Paimann’s Filmlisten*, No. 923 (December 15, 1933): 126-127; *Der gute Film*, No. 55 (December 15, 1933).



imagined the Anglo-American “stranger” as the most treasured prize of the trade, and the different discursive tactics they used to rope those Anglophones in.

Chapter 3 contrasts the disparate situations of the Austrian and Hungarian domestic tourism industries. It investigates why it was that Hungarian promoters all but obsessed over Hungarian tourists’ apparent disloyalty, born of their supposed ignorance of their country, and Austrian promoters did not. Although statistical evidence suggests that there were “objective” structural and socio-economic reasons for their anxiety, the Hungarian promoters’ responses were also the result of their participation in a much larger discourse on the definition of the Hungarian “homeland.” A surge of interest in “homeland studies” – *Heimatkunde* in German and *honismeret* in Hungarian – stimulated intellectuals, educators, and politicians in both countries to research the history, ethnography, and ecology of their native regions. Despite the fact that this field of knowledge shared common origins and methods, Austrian and Hungarian researchers arrived at different conceptions of the meaning of “homeland.” The Austrian *Heimat* was more “bottom-up” and (in neutral terms) strongly provincial, lending itself to diversity, whereas the Hungarian *haza* rested on a more unitary, “top-down” idea of belonging. This was reflected not only in the configuration of the countries’ respective governments, but in their patterns of tourist traffic as well. As concrete examples of this dynamic in action, the chapter looks at two Hungarian cases, the Hungarian State Railway’s *filléres gyors* (penny express) program and the City of Budapest’s School Excursion Train program, both of which were designed to embrace and encourage mass tourism as the means by which Hungarians would “get to know their country.” These are contrasted with the bus system of the Austrian Post Office, and in particular *Im Postkraftwagen durch Österreichs Alpenwelt*, the silent film series commissioned for its promotion, which reinforced the old imperial vision of Austria as a country of many *Heimats*.

Chapter 4 centers on the Hungarian peasant house as a space where multiple agendas of identity-construction intersected. It outlines the growth of the “village tourism” movement in the 1930s through the history of the National Hungarian Hospitality Association’s (Országos Magyar Vendégforgalom Egyesület, or OMVESZ) campaign to encourage middle-class urban Hungarians to spend their summer vacations with peasant families in the countryside. To this end, the OMVESZ leadership pursued a twofold mission: first, to bring tourism within easier reach of low-level white collar workers; second, to use the cultivation of the tourist industry in the countryside as a way of bringing “civilization” to the peasantry. The main target of this mission was the peasant homestead and its members. OMVESZ and like-minded organizations issued detailed instructions on how peasants should clean and rearrange their living spaces – and themselves – in order to be better hosts to picky guests from the city. In exchange, they would receive not only a welcome infusion of cash, but also lessons on how to become healthier, more modern people. Theoretically the visiting urbanites were, for their part, to be schooled in how to be more authentically “Hungarian” – but, as the chapter will show, this was something the promoters were far less interested in seeing through to completion.

Chapter 5 is an essay on the place of the Grand Hotel, one of the most iconic and influential institutions of pre-WWII tourism, in interwar cinema. It examines in detail the parallel but distinct histories of the Palotaszálló (Palace Hotel) at Lillafüred, Hungary and the Weißes Rößl (White Horse) in St. Wolfgang, Austria, arguably the two hotels with the greatest pop-cultural influence in their respective countries. The chapter begins by surveying the remarkably ubiquitous depiction of hotels in the transatlantic movie market of the 1930s, with particular emphasis on the influence of Edmund Goulding’s *Grand Hotel* (1932), suggesting that cinematic hotels were as popular as they were because of their inherent similarity to the experience of

having a “virtual vacation” at the movie theater. It then proceeds with an analysis of the politically contested Lillafüred. Exalted by its supporters as a wondrous fantasy-space beyond contention, it was raised to absolute apotheosis in the smash hit *Meseautó* [Dream Car] (1934), the movie that contemporaries hailed as having vindicated the Hungarian film industry, and which certainly left its mark on Hungarian film production for a decade to come. Then the chapter moves on to look at the White Horse, which, through a popular pre-war stage play, an internationally successful operetta written in 1930, and two interwar film adaptations, was instrumental in creating the image of the Salzkammergut region of Austria as a haven for tourists. It delves into the 1935 film *Im weißen Rößl* [At the White Horse Inn], directed by Carl Lamač, to show how the White Horse, like the Lillafüred Palace Hotel, served as a fairytale space to negate the real political and cultural tensions at the center of *Ständesstaat* Austria. The essay concludes with a brief discussion of these two films’ spiritual successor, Wes Anderson’s *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014).

## 1.8 THE SURVIVAL OF THE EMPIRE IN TOURISM CULTURE

The third process under consideration in this study, finally, is one of uncovering the remnant links of a Habsburg cultural world that, in one way or another, bound Austrians and Hungarians together. Despite the many elegies for the artistic brilliance and romantic boulevard-and-café cityscapes of the Dual Monarchy, very little has been written on the ways in which post-imperial Austrians and Hungarians kept alive the Vienna-Budapest axis of cultural exchange.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Peter Haslinger has provided a helpful foreign-political framework for understanding the continuation of a Vienna-Budapest axis, but as yet nobody has attempted a systematic treatment of its cultural dimensions. See: Peter

Nonetheless, the Habsburg Empire, surviving in cultural and structural traces if not as a living régime, continued to affect its former subjects as they sorted out who they were and what kind of country they lived in. That thread will run through each chapter of this work, although it will not be equally visible at every moment. Alison Frank Johnson has characterized her research on Austria-Hungary's globalized imperial activities as one requiring a sharp and subtle eye. "Although the framing of such an investigation is broad, the connections it depicts only come alive if painted with the finest of brushes."<sup>126</sup> The same deft patience is required if we are to uncover the imperial connections that survived without the formal empire.

These connections were manifested, for one, in the choices tourists made. Between 1927 and 1937, Austria was by far the most popular destination abroad for Hungarian travelers. In that period an average of 140,311 Hungarians made registered visits to Austria each year; Czechoslovakia, the next most popular country (and another former piece of the Habsburg Empire), trailed with an average of 50,062 Hungarian guests per year. Indeed, of these years, only 1934 saw more Hungarians travel to Budapest than to Austria. Travelers from Austria did not return the favor in anywhere the same numbers, which hovered between 20,000 and 30,000 each year, although in the mean they were the most frequent foreign visitors to Budapest.<sup>127</sup> These choices were at least partially determined by the infrastructural development of the empire several decades before, as far as the disposition of rail and road networks. The (mostly one-sided) rivalry between Budapest and Vienna in the Dualist Era for parity as seats of empire

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Haslinger, *Hundert Jahre Nachbarschaft: Die Beziehungen zwischen Österreich und Ungarn, 1895-1994* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996).

<sup>126</sup> Frank, "Continental and Maritime Empires in an Age of Global Commerce," 780.

<sup>127</sup> These figures have been processed from Magyar Gazdaságkutató Intézet, *A magyar idegenforgalom alakulása 1927-1937* (Budapest: Magyar Gazdaságkutató Intézet, 1938), 32 and 47.

carried over into the interwar years.<sup>128</sup> Hungarian tourist promoters found themselves, at once, in competition with and dependent upon Vienna. It was a perpetual source of consternation that Austria was the most popular international destination for Hungarian tourists, who were supposed to prefer to travel within the borders of their homeland. On the other hand, the legacy of the Habsburg transportation network made Vienna the *de facto* “gateway” to Hungary for travelers from the west, and it was therefore necessary for the Hungarian tourism industry to cultivate a presence there. Chapter 2 will discuss this in detail.

Another aspect of the legacy of the Dual Monarchy took the form of a thriving cinema culture shared between Vienna and Budapest. In the first place, the two cities had a kind of symbiotic relationship in the mid-to-late 1930s. Their movie studios drew on a common treasury of creative and technical talent, much of which was stocked by individuals who had been born in some part of the Habsburg Empire. Big-name stars and directors not infrequently split their time between filming in Austria and Hungary, particularly after anti-Jewish production laws in Germany made both countries an unlikely haven for the persecuted and the inspiration for a number of Austrian-Hungarian co-productions.<sup>129</sup> Second, the genre of the operetta, which Moritz Csáky labelled “the final, perhaps even the only art form of the entirety of the Habsburg Monarchy,” enjoyed a second life as the dominant model for films produced in Austria and Hungary in the 1930s.<sup>130</sup> Although no single chapter of the present study focuses on this common post-imperial media world (that will be my goal in a planned future project), with

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<sup>128</sup> A glimpse at that rivalry can be found in: Dorothy Barenscott, “Articulating Identity through the Technological Rearticulation of Space: The Hungarian Millennial Exhibition as World’s Fair and the Disordering of Fin-de-Siècle Budapest,” *Slavic Review* 69, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 571–90.

<sup>129</sup> Armin Loacker and Martin Prucha, eds., *Unerwünschtes Kino: Der deutschsprachige Emigrantenfilm 1934-1937* (Vienna: Filmarchiv Austria, 2000).

<sup>130</sup> Moritz Csáky, *Ideologie der Operette und Wiener Moderne: Ein kulturhistorischer Essay*, 2nd ed. (Vienna: Böhlau, 1998), 272.

greater or lesser presence it lurks behind many of the Austrian-, Hungarian, or co-produced film under discussion here.

## 2.0 “STRANGERS” AND FRIENDS: DEFINING RELATIONSHIPS IN POST- IMPERIAL TOURISM PROMOTION

Commercial tourism, as a cultural activity and an arena of cultural production, is deeply concerned with distinguishing among groups of people. The early, influential sociological theorists of tourism Dean MacCannell and John Urry were quick to suggest that the pleasurable pursuit of seeing something different – different places, different peoples – was the activity’s very *raison d’être*.<sup>131</sup> For their part, tourism promoters have always exercised a powerful hand in perpetuating the appeal of travel as an encounter with difference. Their task is to focus on a given place and its people and impress a brand upon them; to define what makes them, and the experience of encountering them, special and therefore worthy of patronage. For the promoters who sought to lure foreign tourists to Austria and Hungary in the 1920s and 1930s, this process was to a great extent one of trying to define the national “self.” Through their multifarious advertising strategies – which included posters, magazines, films, guidebooks and radio broadcasts – they developed a vocabulary of symbols to illuminate the facets of so-called “national characters.”

As outlined in the introductory chapter, historians have analyzed these promotional artifacts to good effect, uncovering much about how tourist promotion entails the construction of

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<sup>131</sup> Dean MacCannell famously defined sightseeing as “a ritual performed to the differentiation of society.” Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 13. See also: John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2002).

a national “self.”<sup>132</sup> These explorations are valuable, but they only tell part of the story. What eludes us still is a sense of where, precisely, the boundary between “self” and “other” lay. How did tourism promoters imagine the characteristics and desires of the visitors they so fervently hoped would come calling? Who, in their minds, were the people seeking to encounter the special charms of Budapest and Vienna, or the delectably exotic “essences” of folk life in the countryside? What made foreign tourists so substantially different that Austria or Hungary could satisfy their cravings for the unfamiliar? In short: who were “tourists,” how did promoters define them, how did they imagine their characters, and what relationships, both in “objectively” verifiable economics and in promotional discourse, did they share with Austrian and Hungarian locals?

The present chapter pursues three lines of inquiry into these questions. First, it examines the difficulties that sheer terminology has presented to both interwar actors and latter-day historical investigators. Second, finding that tourism between Austria and Hungary was both numerically significant and highly structured by conditions created under the Habsburg Monarchy, the chapter analyzes the touristic relationship between the two countries. The third and final section looks at the oversized role played by Anglo-Saxon – that is to say, British and North American – tourists in the imaginations of Austrian and Hungarian promoters. Despite arriving in comparatively low numbers, Britons and Americans were held in remarkably high

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<sup>132</sup> C.M. Peniston-Bird, “The Debate on Austrian National Identity in the First Republic (1918-1938)” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of St. Andrews, 1997), 397–398; Márta Juszti, “Az idegenforgalom híd szerepének szempontjai a két világháború közötti magyar szaksajtóban,” in *Tudományos évkönyv* (Budapest: Budapesti Gazdasági Főiskola, 2002), 267–73; Gernot Heiss, “Tourismus,” in *Memoria Austriae I: Menschen, Mythen, Zeiten* (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 2004), 330–56; Corinna Peniston-Bird, “Coffee, Klimt, and Climbing: Constructing an Austrian National Identity in Tourist Literature, 1918-38,” in *Histories of Tourism: Representation, Identity and Conflict*, ed. John K. Walton (Clevedon, Buffalo, and Toronto: Channel View Publications, 2005), 162–78; Christian Maryška and Michaela Pfundner, eds., *Willkommen in Österreich: Eine sommerliche Reise in Bildern* (Wien: Metroverlag, 2012); Zsolt Nagy, “Grand Delusions: Interwar Hungarian Cultural Diplomacy, 1918-1941” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2012).



esteem, mainly (but not exclusively) because Austrian and Hungarian promoters saw them as rich, glamorous, and willing to part with their stable currencies – as long as they were courted in the right way.

The evidence presented here suggests that the line dividing the host “self” from the visiting “other” was hardly as bold as the opposition of the terms would imply. In the first place, the very terms interwar Austrians and Hungarians used to define “tourist” and “tourism” only served to muddle the distinction between who was foreign and who was not. Their word of choice was the deeply ambiguous “stranger” (in German, *der Fremde*; in Hungarian, *idegen*), which by itself could only mark “here” from “not-here” in a way that did not necessarily identify nationality. Indeed, the word did not even define the concept of “tourism” with reliable clarity. As economic agents in the tourism industry, strangers could be from anywhere and do just about anything, as long as they did not come from the same destination that received them.

Second, even when promoters did focus on and characterize a particular kind of stranger, they did not automatically discern them as “other.” Beginning in the early 1930s, Austrian and Hungarian promoters hailed travelers from each other’s country as “friends,” though they remained “strangers” in the statistical tables. A privileged post-imperial connection emerged between the two tourism industries, especially as both Austria and Hungary lurched politically to the right and as both, in divergent fashion, confronted the swelling hegemony of the German *Reich*. But though the relationship was important to both sides, it was unequal: another legacy of the imperial past. Hungarian promoters depended on Vienna as a “gateway” for tourists coming from western Europe, and they relied on Austrian visitors for a greater share of incoming traffic than did their Austrian confrères on Hungarians. Then, in their quest to attract English-speaking tourists, whom they seem to have valued more highly than all others, Austrian and Hungarian

promoters often labored to present the national “self” as consonant with the self of the stranger. They imagined that Englishmen in particular would be most interested in seeing what was *familiar* to them, not what was exotic. Furthermore, rather than serve as steady models (or foils) for the construction of a Hungarian national identity, Anglophone tourists faced Hungarian promoters with the threat of a destabilized national “self” through their reputation for failing to know the difference between Austria and its erstwhile imperial partner.

## 2.1 PROBLEMS OF DEFINITION: *FREMDE/IDEGEN*

Promoters dedicated to successfully marketing the experience of seeing Austria or Hungary to potential tourists either at home or abroad conceived of their targets as “strangers.” Although both the German word *Tourist* and the matching Hungarian word *turista* had been in their respective lexicons since at least the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they were most commonly and specifically used to denote “hiker” or “climber” – someone who traveled on foot through natural landscapes, usually mountains, hills, or forests. Occasionally one finds these words applied to leisure travelers more broadly during the interwar period, but such cases would have been rare exceptions. Far more conventional was the use of *Fremde* in German or *idegen* in Hungarian, both of which signified, quite expansively, a person who was unknown, out-of-place, or simply “not from around here.” Thus, when hoteliers, railway executives, politicians, writers, statisticians, and other promoters of leisure travel spoke of “tourism,” they overwhelmingly favored the term *Fremdenverkehr* or *idegenforgalom* – literally, “stranger traffic.”

The use of “stranger” came loaded with a spatial dichotomy. It divided *those from here* and *those from not-here*. The word “foreigner” (German *Ausländer* or Hungarian *külföldi*) also

marked a spatial dichotomy, but its specific reference to the boundaries of the nation-state made it a more precise concept. The question of who constituted a “stranger” thus hinged on the particular point of reception. In terms of official statistics, this could range from the city, town, or commune to the nation-state. The word “stranger” itself could not define the degree of strangeness the way “foreigner” could, since it encompassed both those from the neighboring community as well as those from another continent. It could only reliably indicate that an individual was *locally* unfamiliar: someone who was from outside an immediate social context. At base, then, “stranger” (*idegen/Fremde*) was agnostic of any identity beyond one’s “not-from-here-ness.” The nation could, when relevant, serve as the locality of reference – but it was not necessarily the presumed basis for identification.

This is not to say, of course, that tourism promoters were unable to distinguish between strangers from other countries and strangers who moved from one area of their own country to another. Official statistics tabulated foreign arrivals with even greater precision than they applied to domestic travel, but this distinction was frequently unclear. On one hand, it mattered for reasons of language and presumed economic means. On the other, it was not always feasible, nor even desirable, to create “localized” advertisements that targeted tourists from particular countries, beyond simply changing the language of the text. Moreover, those who had a direct stake in the success of the tourist industry could not afford to alienate one type of tourist in favor of another. Tourists, in short, were too precious a commodity to reject, and the strategies employed to attract them therefore cast a wide net.

The fact that “stranger” did not necessarily describe “tourism” at all made the word all that much more ambiguous. Just as the word contained no data on ethnicity or gender, for example, it failed to define just what the stranger intended to do in a given place. Travelers in

both Austria and Hungary were obliged to register their arrivals with the police, and the paperwork was usually tied to signing in at a hotel or guesthouse. On its own, this information could not stand as proof of any leisure activity – only that someone received lodging as part of a business transaction.

Indeed, the question of how to identify a phenomenon as “tourism” was a subject of conscious debate among contemporaries. Hungarian demographer Gustav Thirring blamed the lack of a consistent, internationally-recognized definition of what constituted tourism (*Fremdenverkehr*) on the fact that the “stranger” (*Fremde*), as unit of statistical analysis, was not “satisfactorily clarified.”<sup>133</sup> He observed that the prevailing conception simply counted anyone who arrived in the locality of record, regardless of the duration or purpose of their stay. He proposed several criteria by which to distinguish the proper participants in *Fremdenverkehr*, ultimately concluding that length of stay was the most decisive factor. His rubric included types that later conceptions of tourism would readily accept – summer vacationers, sportsmen, and “all those persons who travel purely for their own enjoyment, who want to see new countries and get to know foreign peoples and foreign customs” – but also visitors of exhibitions, attendees of congresses, researchers, exchange students, visiting artists, and frequent business travelers. Moreover, Thirring dismissed as “incorrect” the notion that *Fremde* only came from abroad, noting that the comparatively “greater dimensions” of domestic travel deserved no less attention. He noted that domestic *Fremde* often stayed with friends or relatives rather than in hotels or guesthouses, meaning that they eluded the grasp of official statistics.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Gustav Thirring, “Der Begriff des ‘Fremden’ in der Fremdenverkehrsstatistik,” *Revue d l’Institut de Statistique/Review of the International Statistical Institute* 1, no. 3 (1933): 40.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 41–43.

Thirring, as a writer of guidebooks and a keen statistician, had long been involved in the tourism industry of his native Hungary. But the fact that his commentary on the “stranger” appeared in an international journal, and furthermore without reference to any specific country, strongly suggests that he meant to address what he saw as a problem common across the continent. An examination of promotional materials from neighboring Austria would show at once that Thirring’s counterparts across the border were affected by the same issues of identification. For example, a brochure published by the state travel advertisement bureau (Österreichische Verkehrswerbung) in 1935 appealed to a rather hodgepodge collection of traveling types: the Hurried (*Eilende*), the Wanderer (*Bummler*), the Traveler of Cities, the Backpacker, the Friend of Art, the Spa Guest, the Summer Vacationer (*Sommerfrischler*), the Sportsman, and the Studier (*Studierende*).<sup>135</sup> All of these fell under the rubric of “stranger,” but they did not all interact with the tourism industry in the same way.

Yet the question of finding a defining word for the phenomenon of tourism seemed especially fraught for promoters working in the Hungarian language. In writing his 1942 pamphlet on the history of Hungarian tourism, Béla Tausz found his task all the more difficult for that fact that there was no one consistently-applied definition of the word in Hungarian. He insisted, however, that the Hungarian word *idegenforgalom* signified different things than the French *tourisme*, the Italian *turismo*, or the English *tourism*. The semantic range of the Hungarian term was necessarily “much wider, much richer” than the others, because “Hungarian

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<sup>135</sup> Österreichische Verkehrswerbung, *Österreich: Hauptsehenswürdingkeiten – Reiseverkehr – Sommerfrischen und Kurorte – Kunst – Volksleben – Sport – Studium* (Vienna: Österreichische Verkehrswerbung, 1935), 3.

tourism – like every other nation’s – is a special kind of tourism, different from that of other nations.”<sup>136</sup>

Ethnographer László Madarassy, took issue with “idegenforgalom” because of its status as a calque, or loan translation, from the German *Fremdenverkehr*. In his view, the word testified to the unfortunate effects of both capitalism and German culture on what he supposed were more authentically Hungarian values. Madarassy observed that writers were so fickle in choosing the word they used for “tourism” that it could change from page to page within a single issue of one publication. He asserted that before the First World War Hungarians distinguished between two kinds of strangers: “suspect strangers” – whether from abroad or simply another village – who did not adhere to local customs and were therefore held at a distance; and “distinguished strangers,” who were personally invited or received at the behest of the “appropriate recommendations,” or who arrived unexpectedly but “sought our friendship and attempted to live according to our ways.” These latter visitors got special attention and were taken in as “guests.” He claimed that the upheavals of the war introduced a new category: “strangers” who exchanged money for hospitality but, to preserve the dignity of both parties, were granted the euphemistic title “paying guests.” In the 1920s, as Hungarian currency grew weaker and the number of visitors carrying more valuable currencies increased, the word “stranger” took on “an ever more pleasant ring,” and thus *idegenforgalom* ascended to dominance. But, Madarassy argued, this usage stemmed from the mistranslation of the German “Fremde” as “idegen” by “people who were well-meaning but not of a Hungarian frame of mind.” The friendlier, more ancient (because of supposed Turkic roots), and therefore most truly Hungarian word was *vendég*, or “guest.”

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<sup>136</sup> Béla Tausz, *A magyar idegenforgalom története és jövő célkitűzései* (Budapest: A Magyar Idegenforgalmi Érdekeltség Szövetsége, 1942), 4.

Madarassy called upon his readers to treat *idegen* like a “cuckoo” in the Magyar linguistic nest and replace all instances of it with *vendég*.<sup>137</sup>

## 2.2 AUSTRIAN-HUNGARIAN TOURISM RELATIONS: A STATISTICAL OVERVIEW

If promoters’ ambiguous vocabulary for tourists in a general sense did not frame them as effective “others” to the national “self,” something similar can be said of their attempts to define the characteristics of specific kinds of foreign tourists. Corinna Peniston-Bird has observed that, to Austrian promoters, “it was not always clear cut who constituted a foreigner. Nationals of the former Empire, or of German-speaking Central Europe, were not necessarily constructed as ‘other.’ In these cases, foreign tourism was perceived as having similar sociopolitical ramifications to domestic tourism – strengthening ties between peoples rather than people.”<sup>138</sup> Peniston-Bird’s assertion goes a long way in characterizing the post-imperial tourist relationship between Austria and Hungary.

Data from national and municipal statistics bureaus suggest, but cannot confirm, that former imperial partnership of the Austrian and Hungarian states did indeed have an effect on the

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<sup>137</sup> László Madarassy, “Idegen vagy vendég?” *Balatoni Kurir* 45 (1937): 4. The issue continued, occasionally, to arouse the *Balatoni Kurir* commentariat into action. One concerned reader wrote the newspaper in 1941 with an elaborate (and cranky) argument for why the word *turista*, in the sense of a “hiker” or “alpinist,” should be replaced with the more purely “Hungarian” *tájéjáró*, meaning literally “one who moves about the landscape.” “Tájéjáró legyen a ‘turista’!” *Balatoni Kurir*, February 6, 1941: 4. A year later the National Hungarian Tourism Office reportedly asked for the cooperation of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in “Magyarizing” the industry’s vocabulary. Madarassy rehearsed his pitch to substitute *idegenforgalom* with *vendégforgalom*. László Madarassy, “Idegenforgalom, vagy vendégforgalom?,” *Balatoni Kurir*, February 13, 1942: 2. That these later examples appeared just before and during Hungary’s involvement in the war likely explains, at least in part, their puritanical linguistic nationalism.

<sup>138</sup> Peniston-Bird, “Coffee, Klimt, and Climbing,” 172.

distribution of international tourist flows. Before exploring this point further, however, some discussion on the origins and problems of interwar tourism statistics is in order. As already forewarned in Gusztáv Thirring's critique of "Fremde" as a unit of data collection, the tables that Austrian and Hungarian authorities supplied as official measurements of tourist traffic cannot be taken at face value. This is most evident when attempting to draw up comparisons between the two states. In the first place, we lack analogous data: while Austrian authorities collected countrywide statistics (that is, from all registered *Fremdenorte*, or officially-recognized tourist destinations) from 1908 onwards, it was not until 1932 (and in some cases as late as 1936) that information on foreign arrivals to locations outside of Budapest appears in the digests.<sup>139</sup> It is therefore impossible at present to offer a truly accurate comparison of tourism to Austria versus tourism to Hungary, and we are left using Budapest, for which statistics are quite good at least as far back as 1910, as a very imperfect proxy for the entire country. Indeed, based on rough calculations made from the extant data on international arrivals to *some* locations in Hungary, looking only at Budapest may leave out somewhere around 30 percent of the countrywide total.

Another point to note is that the shared method by which Austrian and Hungarian authorities collected their tourism data did not reveal the true number of *Fremde/idegenek*

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<sup>139</sup> This neat summary does not reflect the numerous qualifications to be noted *within* the aggregated Hungarian national data. The numbers that I have found on non-Budapest arrivals – both foreign and domestic – are far from comprehensive of the entire country. The data compiled by the Magyar Gazdaság Kutató Intézet on arrivals to Lake Balaton pertain only to a) 1932 and after; b) 27 named locations around the lake; and c) guests registering stays of three days or longer. From the same source, data on "more important" provincial cities only reflect information on 12 locations (largely concentrated in the western half of the country) for the years 1936-37, and in some instances the information is only on *either* foreign or domestic tourists, or only from *either* 1936 or 1937. Data on individual locations can be obtained from other sources, most significantly Sopron, but, of course, do nothing to help us make estimates on other places. I am supported in marking these difficulties by József Böröcz, whose observations confirm that nationwide data are simply missing until the 1930s. He places the earliest year in which such figures appear at 1933; I, however, have so far only located *relatively* inclusive measurements for 1936-37. The principal source in question is Magyar Gazdaságkutató Intézet, *A magyar idegenforgalom alakulása 1927-1937* (Budapest: Magyar Gazdaságkutató Intézet, 1938), 45–46, which is supplemented by data on Sopron given in Gusztáv Thirring, "A soproni idegenforgalmi statisztika és a város idegenforgalma," *Sztatisztikai Szemle*, no. 7 (1937): 653–65. As to my claims of corroboration, see the comments in József Böröcz, *Leisure Migration: A Sociological Study on Tourism* (Oxford and Tarrytown, NY: Pergamon, 1996), 71–72.



moving about the country. The calculations in both cases were based on the number of times a visitor completed the mandatory police registration form for each venue of paid accommodation. This included hotels and inns (usually called pensions), as well as rooms/beds in private homes (particularly significant for Austria and much less so for Hungary), and so on. Thus if a traveler stayed at multiple locations during his/her journey, he/she would accumulate just as many registrations to his/her name. What this did *not* cover, however, were travelers who stayed in unpaid accommodations – most typically someone who was visiting family – or daytrippers who had no need of accommodation at all.<sup>140</sup> The upshot is that a considerable segment of the tourism economy lay beyond quantification and, more meaningful to the cultural and social historian, more people physically engaged in tourism *of some kind* than the statistics indicate.

A final point to be made about tourism statistics regards “nationality.” When it is said, whether in historical sources or in this dissertation, that in a given year some number of *Austrians* or *Hungarians* or *Germans*, etc. were registered as tourists, this must be understood as an attribute entirely distinct from the question of national identity. The only thing recorded in the data on nationality, which derive ultimately from police records, is the legal “country of origin” written down on the alien registration forms. Such information does not and cannot provide with any empirical certainty knowledge of how an individual registered as legally belonging to a given *state* regarded himself/herself as belonging to a particular *nation*. Nor does it even supply us with reasonably certain knowledge of how his/her contemporaries, in either the sending or receiving country, would have perceived his/her nationality according to contextually relevant

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<sup>140</sup> Brief contemporary explanations of the tabulation methodology can be found in: Erwin Deinlein, “Fremdenverkehrsstatistik und Analyse,” in *Handbuch für den oesterreichischen Fremdenverkehr, 1934*, ed. Bundesministerium für Handel und Verkehr, Gewerbeförderungsdienst (Vienna: Oesterreichische Gesellschaft für Fremdenverkehr, 1934), 37; Magyar Gazdaságkutató Intézet, *A magyar idegenforgalom alakulása*, 8.

standards.<sup>141</sup> Further discouraging any assumptions of national identity should be the fact that in talking about post-Habsburg states we are almost inevitably dealing with states containing one or more irridenta, as acknowledged by contemporaries: Hungarians in Slovakia, Germans in Bohemia, etc. This adds another, politically sensitive layer of *potential* identity to the statistics on tourism. Lastly, one final caveat: interwar tourism promoters were no more able than we are to know how (or even whether) an anonymous registrant self-identified in terms of nationality. Yet they tended to speak and act as though it *was* possible to take for granted that tourist who was marked as Hungarian *was* Hungarian in the fullest sense of national identity. Promoters took these statistics very seriously as the vital signs of the tourist economy, particularly as a measure of success in competing with other countries' promoters for desirable foreign nationals; but they also read them as signs of national moral health, often wielding them disdainfully in an attempt to shame their countrymen into abstaining from travel abroad.

With these important qualifications in mind, we may return now to the ways in which tourism data – in spite of its flaws – helps us see the major features of the Austrian-Hungarian tourism relationship. The first is that, from the 1890s through 1938, and again after 1945 through (at least) 1989, Vienna always enjoyed a vast comparative advantage in foreign tourist arrivals over Budapest. As József Böröcz has argued, this fact can be explained as “a combined effect of the legacy of underdevelopment [in Hungary] activated and exacerbated by wars and generalized political violence.”<sup>142</sup> That is, throughout the span of a century, Vienna (and by extension both imperial and republican Austria) routinely attracted ten or fifteen times as many foreign tourists

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<sup>141</sup> We cannot assume, for example, that every visitor to Hungary categorized in the statistics as “Czechoslovak” thought of themselves as Czechoslovak (or *just* Czech, or *just* Slovak), spoke Czech and/or Slovak, or bore – or was viewed by contemporaries as bearing – whatever attribute of “Czechoslovakness” one cares to mention. Of course, we may imagine that there is a certain probability that all of these things *were* true; but we will never have the means to know, outside, perhaps, of first- or secondhand accounts of travel in which people are identified a particular way.

<sup>142</sup> Böröcz, *Leisure Migration*, 86.

as Budapest (and both Habsburg and Trianon Hungary) as a reflection not only of its more highly developed tourism infrastructure and its comparative stability over time; but also because, as Böröcz posits, influential foreign tourist guidebooks tended to give superior representation to more industrialized regions, and thus did less to encourage travel either to Budapest or to Hungary writ large.<sup>143</sup>

This disparity carried over well into the 1940s, and it came with tangible consequences for Budapest's place on the greater European travel map. The Dualist Era rivalry between Budapest and Vienna for pride of place as the more modern seat of empire (directed mostly by proponents of the former city at the latter) was still by many measures firmly in Vienna's favor by the outbreak of war in 1914. Although, arguably, Vienna emerged from the war considerably worse off than Budapest, it recovered much of the advantages it enjoyed with respect to prestige, global familiarity, tourism infrastructure, and international transportation. These factors were created by Vienna's status as the primary locus of Habsburg power. Thus throughout the interwar years, Budapest remained connected to, even dependent on Vienna as its upstream node in the network of European tourism destinations.

The dependence was at once physical and cultural, and its manifestations were many. In the chaos of the immediate postwar years, when the Hungarian state railway lacked basic resources and occupying foreign powers to the north, east, and south denied the international movement of Hungarian trains, a pair of Vienna expresses offered the sole lifeline. Indeed, when the Vienna line reopened in August 1920, a journalist for *Magyarország* hailed it as a moral victory of Hungary over its Slavic and Romanian oppressors, and more generally as Hungary's

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 54–62.

gateway to the West.<sup>144</sup> In 1931, mighty Baedeker, still the industry standard in the publication of European tourist guidebooks, saw fit to produce a brand new volume covering both Vienna and Budapest, “sister cities on the Danube.”<sup>145</sup> The official tourism promotion agency of the Austrian state (Österreichisches Verkehrsbureau) gave room at the end of its comprehensive annual catalog of hotels and guesthouses to a special section on Hungary, perhaps at the paid request of Hungarian promoters, who were forever seeking a toehold in foreign advertising venues.<sup>146</sup> Even the Central Statistical Office of Hungary declared Vienna to be the “most important big city” from the perspective of Budapest tourism.<sup>147</sup>

With the “neighboring” metropolis consistently bringing in hundreds of thousands more tourist visits each year, it is no wonder the Budapest civic authorities thought it both worthwhile and necessary to invest in a way to skim some of those visitors in their direction. In October 1931 city officials opened the “Budapest Tourism Office in Vienna” in the former Palais Todesco at Kärntnerstraße 51, right in the heart of Vienna’s central commercial district. After approximately 14 months in operation, the office was able to claim that it had successfully funneled at least 2,087 travelers to Budapest through direct ticket sales. Of the 17,130 visitors to the office recorded in 1932, Austrians accounted for 6,849, Germans for 2,903, Americans for 1,551, and, curiously enough, 2,254 Hungarians. These four categories comprised 79 percent of the total, indicating perhaps somewhat surprisingly (given their relative proximity) that central Europeans were particularly interested in viewing promotional materials on Hungary.<sup>148</sup> What’s more, the office extended its reach throughout Vienna and beyond by paying to place

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<sup>144</sup> “A bécsi gyors,” *Magyarország*, August 10, 1920: 1. Cf. the retrospective and more measured József Klaudy, *Az európai legelső nemzeti utazási iroda története: a MÁV menetjegyirodájának negyven éve* (Debrecen: Tiszántúli Könyv- és Lapkiadó, 1943), 47.

<sup>145</sup> Karl Baedeker, *Wien und Budapest: Handbuch für Reisende* (Leipzig: Karl Baedeker, 1931), v.

<sup>146</sup> Österreichisches Verkehrsbureau, *Austria-Hotelbuch* (Vienna: Österreichisches Verkehrsbureau, 1933), 81–89.

<sup>147</sup> “Auszttria és Bécs idegenforgalmának alakulása 1932-ben,” *Sztatisztikai Szemle*, no. 4 (1933): 255.

<sup>148</sup> Vilmos Kovács házy, “A Budapesti Idegenforgalmi Iroda Bécsben,” *Városi Szemle* XIX, no. 1 (1933): 61–87.

advertisements on public transportation vehicles, in post offices, and in carriages of the Austrian national railway.<sup>149</sup>

Second, “mutual” tourism between Austria and Hungary comprised significant proportions of both states’ tourist traffic throughout the interwar period. To be sure, this also was an unequal relationship. For the Hungarian tourism industry, Austria represented, on one hand, a reliable source of foreign travelers and, on the other, its archenemy in the struggle to retain domestic tourists. Between 1924 and 1937, total foreign registrations in Budapest numbered 1,524,923, with an average intake of slightly under 109,000 per year. Of these, 296,685 (an average of 21,192 per year) were credentialed as Austrian. Thus the Austrian “share” of the Budapest tourism industry stood at 19.4 percent, the highest overall fraction during this 14-year period. It was not a domineering proportion, as the next-highest source of foreign registrations, Czechoslovakia, sent 16.9 percent of the total in the same span of time.<sup>150</sup> These figures, however, do not reflect annual fluctuations, the patterns of which show that the primacy of Austrian tourists in Budapest was an unstable one. Figure 1 below allows for a comparative glance of the numbers of tourists arriving from the four largest contributors.

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<sup>149</sup> Lajos I. Illyefalvi, *Budapest Székesfőváros statisztikai és közigazgatási évkönyve*, vol. XXIII (Budapest: Budapest Székesfőváros Statisztikai Hivatal, 1935): 329.

<sup>150</sup> Data sources: Magyar Gazdaságkutató Intézet, *A magyar idegenforgalom alakulása*, 32; Alajos Kovács, “Budapest és Bécs idegenforgalma,” *Sztatisztikai Szemle*, no. 9 (1930): 756.

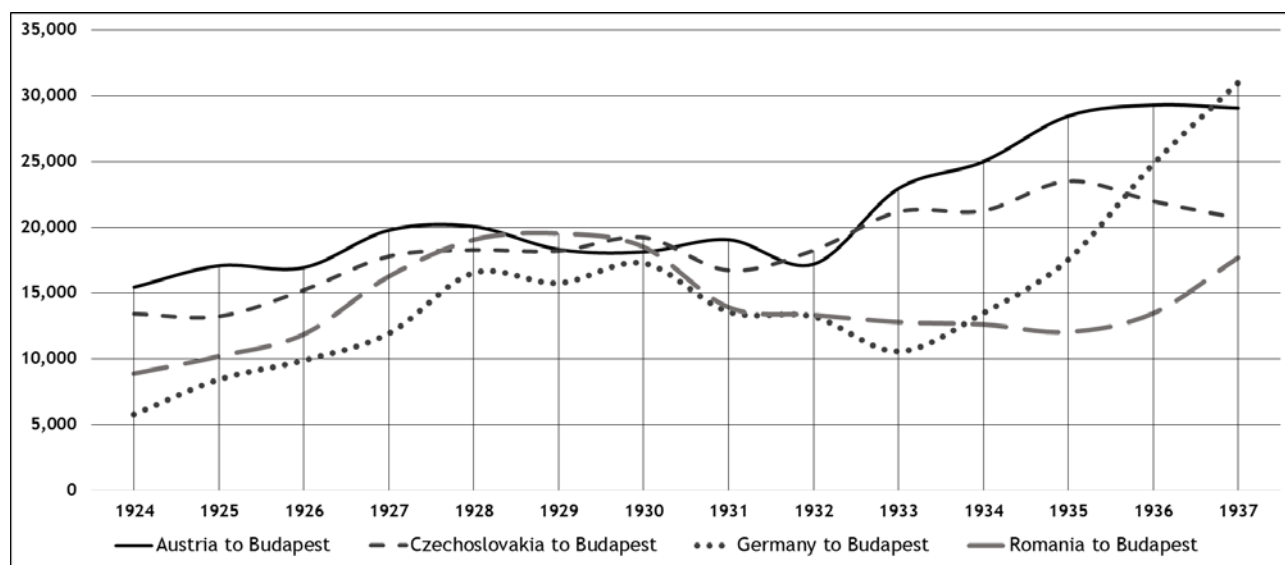


Figure 1. Foreign arrivals to Budapest, 1924-1937: top four countries of origin<sup>151</sup>

The debit side of this relationship with Austria, from the perspective of Hungarian promoters, was that “passive tourism” to Austria during the interwar years was far greater than to any other country. That is, more Hungarians – by a commanding margin – went abroad to become registrants in Austria than they did in any other part of the world. In fact, by the best available estimate the total number of Hungarians visiting Austria between 1927 and 1937 comfortably outstripped the number of *all* foreigners arriving in Budapest over the same period (1,988,546 versus 1,524,923).<sup>152</sup> The Hungarian tourism industry’s perpetually negative balance of foreign traffic was one of its promoters’ scariest *bêtes noires* in the 1930s. Clearly, that their biggest rival market for *Hungarian* tourists lay so close to hand was an understandable cause for anxiety. But, oddly, they were more inclined to complain about Hungarians going to Switzerland, Germany, Italy, or France than they were to demonize Austria. Perhaps this was

<sup>151</sup> Data sources: Magyar Gazdaságkutató Intézet, *A magyar idegenforgalom alakulása*, 32; Kovács, “Budapest és Bécs idegenforgalma,” 756.

<sup>152</sup> Magyar Gazdaságkutató Intézet, *A magyar idegenforgalom alakulása*, 47.

because of an acceptance that Hungarians were habitual travelers to Austria since Habsburg times, and that their habit would not soon break; it may reflect the fact that Austria was Hungary's largest source of foreign tourists, and therefore the relationship seemed less one-sided; or perhaps it was also that traveling greater distances abroad demanded more effort and money, and so appeared an even more willful "betrayal."

The situation in Austria was rather different. With the crucial exception of the period between the spring of 1933 through July 1936, tourism from Germany thoroughly dwarfed traffic from anywhere else, as can be seen readily in Figure 2 below. From 1924 through 1937, a total of 7,786,793 Germans registered as visitors, with an average annual total of 556,200. In contrast to the Hungarian market, in which no source lorded over the others, the interwar Austrian tourism industry was dependent on German travelers. The sudden bottoming-out of German traffic between 1933 and 1936 was the result, as intended, of the *Tausend-Mark Sperre* ("Thousand-Mark Blockade") imposed on Austria by Germany. Until the "July Agreement" of 1936, the *Reich* government decreed that any German citizen wishing to travel to Austria would be assessed a fee of 1,000 Marks. This nakedly punitive measure came in response to Dollfuss's anti-Nazi policies and was designed to ruin the Austrian economy by choking off a very lucrative supply of tourists.<sup>153</sup> The season following the 1936 rapprochement saw a predictable return to form for German traffic to Austria – just in time, it turns out, for the issue to be rendered irrelevant by the union of the two countries in March 1938. Hungarian tourists, for their part, comprised the third-most numerous group of travelers to Austria in the period 1924-1937. With

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<sup>153</sup> For an exhaustive account of the *Sperre* and its consequences for the Austrian tourism industry, see: Gustav Otruba, A. Hitler's "*Tausend-Mark-Sperre*" und die Folgen für Österreichs Fremdenverkehr (1933-1938) (Linz: Rudolf Trauner Verlag, 1983).

1,988,546 total registrations over these fourteen years, Hungarians trailed Czechoslovaks (2,895,955 total registrations) by a sizeable margin.

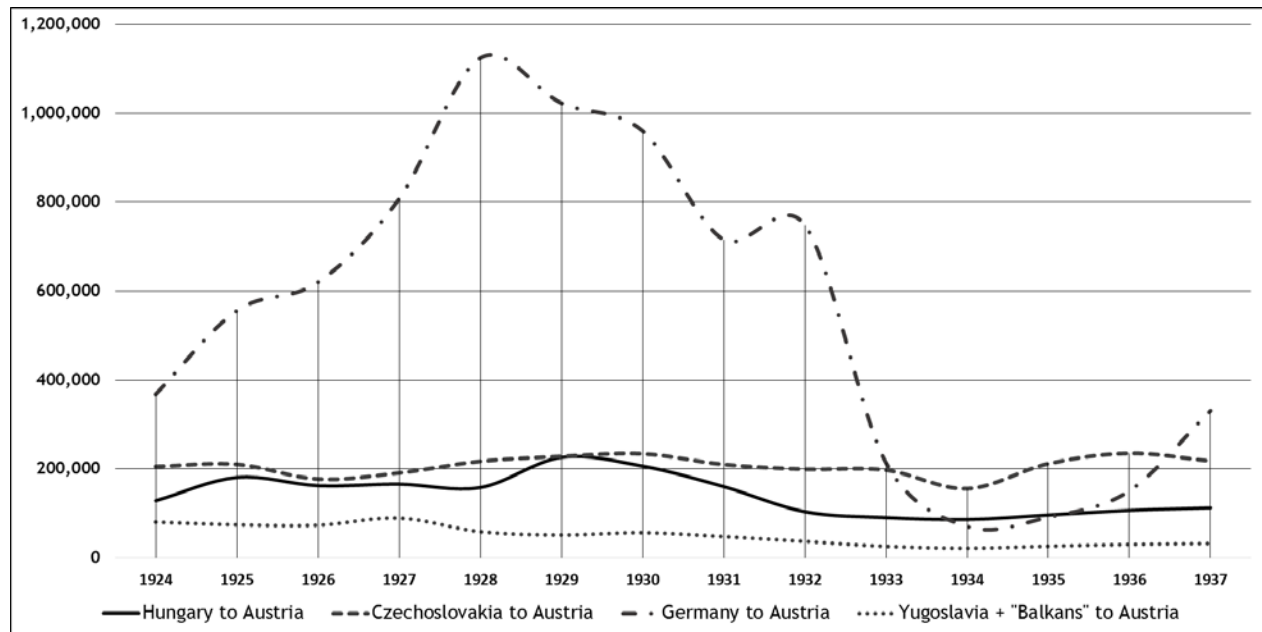


Figure 2. Foreign arrivals to Austria, 1924-1937: top four countries of origin<sup>154</sup>

We see from this comparison, therefore, that, in terms of volume and direction of traffic, the relationship between the Austrian and Hungarian tourism industries was an unequal one. Not only did Austria receive many hundreds of thousands more foreign arrivals than Hungary, but the flow from Austria to Hungary, though very important from a Hungarian perspective, was a mere 15 percent of the flow in the opposite direction. It is crucial, however, to understand this

<sup>154</sup> Note that when Austrian authorities calculated tourism statistics, they thought in terms of Yugoslavia on one hand and "Balkan countries" on the other. The latter, though never specified, presumably included Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania, and possibly included Greece. In some tabulations no distinction is made between Yugoslavia and this "Balkan" assemblage. Sources: A.J. Norval, *The Tourist Industry: A National and International Survey* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, 1936), 59; Bundesamt für Statistik, *Statistisches Handbuch für die Republik Österreich*, vol. VI (Vienna: Bundesamt für Statistik, 1925), 29; Otruba, A. *Hitler's "Tausend-Mark-Sperre,"* 114.



not simply as a bilateral connection between two nation-states, but as one strand in a bigger web of post-imperial relationships. If we assemble the top four sources of foreign tourists to Austria into a list with their Hungarian counterparts, seven of those eight items count as successor states to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and four overlap. Viewed one way, this is a pattern of international tourism; viewed another, it is a pattern of intra-imperial tourism made “international” by the recent emergence of new state boundaries. “With the dissolution of the Dual Monarchy,” observes József Böröcz, “many of the traditional ‘domestic’ visitors—i.e. those from Bohemia, Moravia, [...] Hungary or Croatia—suddenly came to be *foreign* travelers” to Austria. This, Böröcz posits, helps explain why Austria enjoyed such an enormous advantage over Hungary in the competition for tourists during the interwar years: tourist flows “inherited” from late imperial times “was bound to increase the number of tourists registered as foreigners.”<sup>155</sup> Böröcz notes that while Hungary had “less of a legacy to continue benefiting from” because its pre-1918 traffic also had been overshadowed by Austria’s, it was bequeathed one nonetheless.

### 2.3 TOURISM & POST-IMPERIAL “FRIENDSHIP,” 1930-1938

Examining the post-imperial tourist relationship between Austria and Hungary closer to “the ground,” beyond the informative but rather bloodless realm of statistics, we find evidence that it played out in more friendly and intimate terms than market asymmetries and economic competition might imply. For more than a decade, post-Habsburg diplomatic relations between

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<sup>155</sup> Böröcz, *Leisure Migration*, 68.

Austria and Hungary were characterized by mutual wariness. Among the frictions aggravating this condition were: the Hungarian ruling élite's anti-communist distaste for the power of the Austrian Social Democrats, as well as by early struggles over the territorial legacy (Burgenland and its so-called capital, Oedenburg/Sopron) and archival legacy (records of the Austro-Hungarian ministries) of the empire. In the waning years of the 1920s, however, obvious cracks in the ice began to widen. Two recently-formed Hungarian educational exchange institutions in Vienna, the Hungarian Institute for Historical Research (Magyar Történetkutató Intézet) and the Collegium Hungaricum, doubled as centers of cultural diplomacy.<sup>156</sup> Associations of Great War veterans organized mixed Austrian-Hungarian reunions at which Franz Joseph's former soldiers joined in nostalgic rounds of old favorites like the "Deutschmeister-Regimentsmarsch."<sup>157</sup> Not least of all, leisure mobility was aided (in theory) by the formation of an Austrian-Hungarian "tourism committee" in 1928, whose negotiations over advertising allowances and the lowering of travel restrictions helped lead to the introduction of visa-free travel between the two countries in May 1930, as well as the establishment of the Budapest tourism office in Vienna as described above.<sup>158</sup> But while these collaborations may have made for a warmer post-imperial political relationship, it is unclear how meaningful they were for the actual tourist trade. A glance at Figure 1 above intimates that, at best, the Hungarian visa abolition spurred Austrian tourism by a very modest amount (18,119 Budapest arrivals in 1931 versus 19,056 in 1930). On the other

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<sup>156</sup> Nagy, "Grand Delusions: Interwar Hungarian Cultural Diplomacy, 1918-1941," 122-123. The Institute for Historical Research was founded in 1920, and the Collegium Hungaricum, which eventually had sibling branches in Berlin, Paris, Rome, and Constantinople, was founded in 1924. Iván Nagy, "Magyar diákok külföldjárása," in *A Collegium Hungaricum Szövetsége zsebkönyve*, ed. János Martonyi (Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, 1936), 23.

<sup>157</sup> Peter Haslinger, *Hundert Jahre Nachbarschaft: Die Beziehungen zwischen Österreich und Ungarn, 1895-1994* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996), 218.

<sup>158</sup> Haslinger, *Hundert Jahre Nachbarschaft*, 201 and 216.

hand, small as it was, this increase stands in notable contrast to rapidly declining tourist arrivals from other countries.

By this time the effects of the American stock market crash of 1929 were becoming ever more palpable in Europe. This was especially so in east-central Europe, where predominantly agrarian economies faced particularly severe structural difficulties in maintaining stability. Austrian and Hungarian diplomats, seeking, in part, to mitigate the crisis, deepened their states' mutual relationship first through a Treaty of Friendship, Conciliation, and Arbitration (*Freundschafts-, Vergleichs- und Schiedsgerichtsvertrag/Barátság, békeltető eljárási és választott bírósági szerződés*) at the end of January 1931 and a tariff-lowering bilateral trade treaty later that June.<sup>159</sup> In the chancelleries of Paris and Prague, ideas were bruited for making a preferential customs union the basis of a "Danubian confederation," which would to a certain extent recreate the regional economic advantages once conferred by the Habsburg Empire. Most famous of these was the "Tardieu Plan," advanced by French foreign minister André Tardieu in the spring of 1932, which gained some traction for a brief time but was quickly squashed by Britain, Italy, and Germany for various reasons.<sup>160</sup>

These diplomatic maneuverings, though they are worth noting, are much overshadowed by the consequences of the May 1931 collapse of the Viennese Creditanstalt, which fundamentally worsened the financial situation in east-central Europe, and by the subsequent triumph of radical rightwing politics as a response to deepening socio-economic crisis. Engelbert Dollfuss became chancellor of Austria in May 1932, and Gyula Gömbös prime minister of

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 221-222 for the Treaty on Friendship etc. and 230-235 for the trade treaty.

<sup>160</sup> Zara Steiner, *The Lights That Failed: European International History 1919-1933* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 676. Former Hungarian prime minister István (Stephen) Bethlen was among those who expressed interest in the principle of a customs union among the Successor States; here, writing for an American academic journal, we have a Hungarian statesman retrospectively praising the Habsburg Monarchy as "nothing but a political and economic Pan-Europe of the small nations of the Danube basin." Stephen Bethlen, "The Danube States and the Tardieu Plan," *Political Science Quarterly* 47, no. 3 (1932): 352-62.

Hungary in October. Men of differing temperaments but not entirely dissimilar backgrounds (both came from agrarian families, and both had been military officers), Dollfuss and Gömbös shared a common hostility towards Marxism and disdain for liberal parliamentarianism.<sup>161</sup>

Dollfuss struck against them first and most dramatically. He shuttered Parliament in March 1933, established the nonpartisan (i.e. corporatist) Vaterländische Front (Fatherland Front or Patriotic Front) political organization in May 1933, outlawed Nazis, Communists, and Social Democrats, and destroyed the socialist paramilitaries of the Republikanischer Schutzbund in a brief but bitter civil war in February 1934. These were the foundational moments of the *Ständesstaat* (“society of estates” or “corporate state”), which Dollfuss and his allies envisaged as a piously Catholic, distinctly Austrian alternative to Nazism – and, crucially, with Italian backing.<sup>162</sup> For his defiance of Hitler, Dollfuss was rewarded with the Thousand-Mark Blockade and finally, in the midst of an abortive Nazi *Putsch* in July 1934, assassination. His replacement, Kurt Schuschnigg, put on Dollfuss’s mantle, but without the same vision or optimism. It was his dubious privilege to be the last chancellor of the First Republic, and he was left appealing in vain to Austrian nationalism – “Till We’re Dead: Red-White-Red!” – as German troops massed on the border.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Gordon Brook-Shepherd, *The Austrians: A Thousand-Year Odyssey* (London: HarperCollins, 1996), 263–265; C.A. Macartney, *October Fifteenth: A History of Modern Hungary, 1929-1945*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1957), 33–34.

<sup>162</sup> Recent works taking a fresh look at the nature of the Austrofascist state: Robert Pyrah, “Enacting Encyclicals? Cultural Politics and ‘Clerical Fascism’ in Austria, 1933-1938,” in *Clerical Fascism in Interwar Europe*, ed. Matthew Feldman, Marius Turda, and Tudor Georgescu (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 157–70; Julie Thorpe, “Austrofascism: Revisiting the ‘Authoritarian State’ 40 Years On,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 45, no. 2 (2010): 315–43; Julie Thorpe, *Pan-Germanism and the Austrofascist State, 1933-38* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2011); Janek Wasserman, *Black Vienna: The Radical Right in the Red City, 1918-1938* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).

<sup>163</sup> Exactly how popular the annexation of Austria was among those living in Austria has been a deeply contested (or deliberately avoided) question since at least 1945. According to perhaps the most systematic archival assessment, the answer likely is: more popular than not, at least in the first few months. Austrians’ opinions became gloomier and more resentful as time went on, however. Evan Burr Bukey, *Hitler’s Austria: Popular Sentiment in the Nazi Era, 1938-1945* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

Gömbös, on the other hand, looked and spoke far more like Mussolini than did the Chaplinesque Dollfuss. Whereas the earnest Austrian “Millimeternich” (as Dollfuss was called because of his remarkably short stature) rose to power from within the ranks of the long-established Christian Social Party, Gömbös had gotten close to Regent Miklós Horthy as a right-radical member of the counterrevolutionary military government in 1919-1921.<sup>164</sup> Attempting to seize his moment in the sun as an occasion for a “changing of the guard,” Gömbös reformed the ruling party (now called the Party of National Unity) according to Italian and German fascist examples, proposed anti-labor corporatist measures, cozied up to Berlin and Rome, thumped the shield for irredentism, and engineered a parliamentary crisis that resulted in his party gaining an absolute majority.<sup>165</sup> But in the course of building his rightist program, Gömbös ran afoul of the aristocratic and “liberal-conservative” élite, which, fearing for its own political and social position, tried to rein him in.<sup>166</sup> Whether he could have achieved his own brand of a Nazi-inspired state was a question never fully assayed, for Gömbös died suddenly on a trip to Germany in October 1936.

In broad strokes, then, the governments and societies of Austria and Hungary were more alike in early 1936 than they had been at any point since 1918. Perhaps the single biggest issue (there are many details) that should warn against overdrawing congruities, however, is the respective place of Germany in Austrian and Hungarian foreign affairs. Gömbös had a freer hand in dealing with Hitler than did Dollfuss or Schuschnigg. While the Austrian economy suffered under the grip of the Thousand-Mark Blockade, in 1934 Gömbös signed a momentous

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<sup>164</sup> Thomas Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback: Miklós Horthy, 1918-1944* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1994), 22.

<sup>165</sup> Iván T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1998), 115–116.

<sup>166</sup> Paul Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary: Religion, Nationalism, and Antisemitism, 1890-1944* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006), 138; Macartney, *October Fifteenth: A History of Modern Hungary, 1929-1945*, 1:309–310, cf. Berend, *Decades of Crisis*, 115–116.

trade pact with the Germans, which turned out to be the first strand in a burgeoning Nazi trade network in east-central Europe.<sup>167</sup> It was instead the tutelage of Mussolini's Italy that brought Austria and Hungary into a common geopolitical grouping. Dollfuss, Gömbös, and Mussolini signed the Rome Protocols in March 1934, "pledging [them...] to joint consultation and economic co-operation."<sup>168</sup>

It was in this wider political setting that the touristic relationship between Austria and Hungary seems to have taken on greater symbolic and economic importance. The change is apparent on three levels: the level of "official," or state-sponsored culture, the level of commercially-sponsored culture, and on the "ground level" of tourism. At the highest level we find the autumn 1935 formation of the Magyar-Osztrák Társaság (Hungarian-Austrian Society; hereafter MOT) in Budapest and its twin, the Österreichisch-Ungarische Gesellschaft (Austrian-Hungarian Society; hereafter ÖUG), in Vienna. According to the founding charter of the MOT, its purpose was "the concentration of Austria's Hungarian friends into one association; the deepening of the Hungarian and Austrian people's existing [*fennálló*] friendly connections; [and] especially the care and development of Hungarian-Austrian cultural, social, economic, touristic, and sporting connections."<sup>169</sup> Although they were not government agencies, and although information on rank-and-file membership is not available, the groups' regular and honorary officers were current and former holders of high office or lower-level bureaucrats, all of whom, in any case, hailed from the social élite.<sup>170</sup> Few documents about the activities of either the MOT

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<sup>167</sup> Berend, *Decades of Crisis*, 272.

<sup>168</sup> Zara Steiner, *The Triumph of the Dark: European International History 1933-1939* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 69.

<sup>169</sup> The sentiment was *mutatis mutandis* for the Austrian version, presumably. *A Magyar-Osztrák Társaság 165,054. 1935/VII-a. szám alatt belügyminiszterileg jóváhagyott alapszabályai* (Budapest: n.p., 1935) [OSZK shelf no. 98.413], 3.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 13; Letter from [Lajos] Rudnay to M. Kir. Követség, Bécs (December 5, 1935), MOL K149 187. csomó, 7. tétel, 3137. szám. It is representative of the era, and certainly worth mentioning, that what occasioned this letter was

or the ÖUG appear to have survived, but the sources we have indicate that they catered to a highly educated, upper-class audience, especially one with an affinity for classical music. The groups also collaborated on “travel exchange” in offering group tours to either country and a “child exchange” program whereby Austrian children could summer with a suitable Hungarian family (and vice versa).<sup>171</sup>

These organizations bear the marks of encouraging friendship “from above.” *Austria-Hungaria*, the ÖUG’s official magazine, was of noticeably high design quality and received contributions from Austrian and Hungarian cabinet ministers, diplomats, and other government representatives. It bore a close resemblance to state-sponsored tourist magazines of the period, offering paeans to “high” cultural connections between the countries (Liszt, Beethoven, theater, etc.), striking pictures of the “national” landscape, essays on how commerce and the Danube linked the two peoples’ fates, and so on. Yet for all its allegedly “non-partisan” geniality the political edge of *Austria-Hungaria* is palpable not only in its collection of authors but, simply enough, in the magazine’s logo (which was also possibly the logo of the ÖUG). This combined the double cross (‡) on the Hungarian royal coat of arms with the cross potent, or *Krückenkreuz* (⦿), that appeared on Austrian coinage after 1924 and was the main emblem of the Vaterländische Front. When used in the latter case, it stood as a conspicuous riposte to the swastika (*Hakenkreuz*) of the Nazis. Appearing in the nameplate (and elsewhere) of *Austria-Hungaria*, the icon not only symbolized the spiritual unity of Austria and Hungary; it implied

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that the staff of the Hungarian Embassy in Vienna felt it necessary to deny that there was an Osztrák-Magyar *Egyesület* (cf. the actual Gesellschaft/Társaság) “swarming” with Jews. Rather, Rudnay wrote his superiors insisting the Gesellschaft was “one association in which there are scarcely any Jews.” (Underline in the original.)

<sup>171</sup> “Wir Berichten und Melden: Unsere Arbeit,” *Austria-Hungaria* 1, no. 2/3 (1936): 30-31. Somewhat less highfalutin was a night of quality operetta at the Royal Opera in Budapest, to see Franz (Ferenc) Lehár’s *Das Land des Lächelns* performed with the famous Richard Tauber and crowned by an appearance by the composer himself. Invitation from Géza Tormay to the members of the Magyar-Osztrák Társaság (January 26, 1938), MOL K148 998. csomó, 17. tétel, 672. szám.

that this friendship was founded on Catholic and anti-liberal, even perhaps fascist – but not Nazi – values and that it could claim pre-modern, even medieval roots. Indeed, a full page of the first issue was dedicated to a hymn to the Virgin Mary as the guardian saint of both nations, replete with an illustration of Madonna and Child.<sup>172</sup>

Below the level of government-supported “friendship” initiatives, in which tourism was one area of interest among many, we find a hybrid level on which business interests, social and sporting clubs, and, to a lesser extent, state interventions comingled in the focused promotion of Austro-Hungarian tourist relations. One example comes from the sizeable libraries of guidebooks that issued forth from Vienna and Budapest. These were not in the same class as the critical, canonical Baedekers or Blue Guides.<sup>173</sup> Rather, they were shot through with advertisements (which arguably diluted the ostensible purpose of the thing) and made no secret of their promotional nature. As a class they took a scattershot approach towards defining an audience, attempting mainly to appeal to as many types of “strangers” as possible. This was obviously easier for Austrian promoters, who could reasonably expect to reach a wide Germanophone readership. Thus it is comparatively noteworthy to find nation-specific offerings like the *Budapest and Balaton Guide (Budapest- und Balaton-Führer)* published for the 1936 season by a collection of Hungarian government and municipal agencies and distributed in Vienna free of charge. While generically such a pamphlet is not especially interesting, this one stands as a rare example of a Hungarian guidebook written with Viennese travelers specifically in mind. Most interesting of all is that it attempts to entice the reader by “translating” certain Budapest spaces and landmarks into analogues that Viennese would (presumably) understand. Thus Váci utca, the

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<sup>172</sup> Mark Solluna, “Magna Mater Austriae, Patrona Hungariae,” *Austria-Hungaria* 1, no. 1 (1936): 5.

<sup>173</sup> Nicholas T. Parsons, *Worth the Detour: A History of the Guidebook* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2007), esp. Chapters 9 and 10 for the history of Baedeker and its peers.



city's central shopping district, "corresponds to Vienna's Kärntnerstrasse," and the Városliget (City Park) is described (rather optimistically) as "a kind of Venice in Vienna" that combined Vienna's Prater with the Venice stand-in coming in the form of pleasure-boating in the park's artificial pond.<sup>174</sup>

Another, more substantial example of activity at this hybrid level is the formation of the Magyar Osztrák Alpési Egyesület (Hungarian-Austrian Alpine Association; hereafter MOAE) in 1934. MOAE's exterior purpose was to bring together Hungarian sportsmen and tourists interested in the kinds of pastimes that the geography of post-1920 Hungary could support only weakly, namely upland pursuits like skiing and mountain climbing. Austria's slopes and peaks, however, were right next door, well developed, free from anti-Hungarian antagonism, and relatively affordable.<sup>175</sup> Taking a cue from the long-established Deutscher und Österreicher Alpenverein (DuÖAV), which had joined Habsburg and Imperial German mountaineers under a common organizational banner since 1873, MOAE intended, in the words of one supporter, "to recruit together the alpinist circles [*túrista társadalom*] of two neighboring and friendly nations."<sup>176</sup> Unlike its more illustrious predecessor, though, MOAE seems to have been more a vehicle for commercial tourism promotion than a "pure" sports club. Its magazine, *Alpine Courier* (*Alpési Kurir*) – which, after taking flak from nationalist critics, changed to *Hungarian Alpine Courier* (*Magyar Alpési Kurir*) for its second (and apparently final) year – was sponsored by the Budapest branch of the Austrian tourism office (Österreichisches Verkehrsbureau) and the

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<sup>174</sup> J. Wolf-Solomin, ed., *Budapest- und Balaton-Führer 1936* (Vienna: Inex, 1936), 26.

<sup>175</sup> Frigyes Benedek, "Van-e létjogosultsága Magyarországon az alpinizmusnak és a sielésnek?" *Alpési Kurir* 1, no. 1 (1934): 5-6.

<sup>176</sup> Ferenc Balassa, "Köszönet a 'Magyar Turista Élet'-nek," *Alpési Kurir* 1, no. 2 (June 1934): 1. For detailed, recent studies of the Deutscher und Österreicher Alpenverein, see: Tait S. Keller, "Eternal Mountains—Eternal Germany: The Alpine Association and the Ideology of Alpinism, 1909-1939" (Ph.D. dissertation, Georgetown University, 2006). and Lew Wallace Holt, "Mountains, Mountaineering, and Modernity: A Cultural History of German and Austrian Mountaineering, 1900-1945" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 2008).

tourism division of the Phönix Life Insurance Company.<sup>177</sup> As a journal, *Alpine Courier* was in fact nicely produced and its balance of articles to advertisements favored the former; but when these were not entertaining short stories or serial fiction, they were, for the most part, flattering descriptions of Austrian tourism venues. Furthermore, aimed primarily at Hungarians, MOAE was not as genuinely international as the DuÖAV. Austrian citizens were prohibited from joining the organization as anything more than affiliate or honorary members, and while a companion branch opened in Vienna in 1935, this was designed to attract Hungarians living in the city and as a means of collaborating with Austrian leisure associations.<sup>178</sup> Nevertheless, Austrian tourists did participate in MOAE's numerous group excursions, particularly those it sent to Hungary.<sup>179</sup> Unfortunately, the fate of the MOAE becomes obscure after no further issues of the *Alpine Courier* appear, perhaps because it was a casualty of the Phönix Life Insurance Company's collapse in early 1936. But the existence of the group, however short-lived, is another illustration of the way that the diplomatic and political developments of the early 1930s helped spur the growth of Austrian-Hungarian tourism connections.

Information on the “ground level” of Austrian-Hungarian tourist exchange is not easy to come by. What does emerge, however, is an image of mutual respect – but, yet again, of a relationship that loomed much larger in the imagination of Hungarians than of Austrians. Travelers from the former imperial partner-state were especially sought after in visitor-hungry

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<sup>177</sup> This was the same Phönix that failed scandalously in early 1936 and caused an international financial upset, to the detriment of the Schuschnigg government. The results of the federal investigation were published widely. “Die Ergebnisse der Phönix-Untersuchung,” *Neue Freie Presse*, April 29, 1936: 3.

<sup>178</sup> Although I have not located MOAE's charter, remarks on its membership rules can be found in Balassa, “Köszönet a ‘Magyar Turista Élet’-nek”; the formation of the Vienna branch was announced in “Megalakult a Magyar Osztrák Alpési Egyesület wieni társegyesülete,” *Magyar Alpési Kurir* 2, no. 11 (November 1935): 1-2.

<sup>179</sup> According to a report on MOAE's first general meeting in September 1934, it had organized 98 tours with 848 total participants, only three of which at this stage took place in Austria (with 138 participating). Frigyes Benedek, “A Magyar Osztrák Alpési Egyesület első rendes közgyűlése 1934. szeptember 13-án,” *Alpési Kurir* 1, no. 3 (November 1934): 1. On Austrian participation: “Nyári beszámoló,” *Magyar Alpési Kurir* 2, no. 8-9 (August-September 1935): 19.

resort towns around Lake Balaton, which, more than other locations in Hungary, depended on tourism for their livelihood. Austrians – and any foreigners that might enter Hungary with them, via the highway from Graz – received warm welcomes from the tourist business operators of the Lake Balaton resort towns; and when the Anschluss severed this connection, it cast a pall over the resorts' future success.<sup>180</sup> It did not take throngs of Austrians for the occasion of their arrival to be considered an event worthy of intense scrutiny. Keszthely-based newspaper *Balatoni Kurír* (Balaton Courier), an independent weekly covering news and opinions related to the tourism business in the major resort areas, often reported on the visits of tour groups, keenly wringing out as much evidence of consumer satisfaction – and criticism – as it could discover. One such instance from 1933 reads as follows:

For some days now, the beach at the King Matthias Hotel in Balatonkenese has been noisy with good cheer. Thirty Austrian holidaymakers paddle among the warm waves of the Hungarian Sea. On the first day, the proprietor, Károly Major, surprised his Austrian guests with chicken paprikash. They thought it wonderfully tasty and asked that he cook for them only Hungarian dishes from now on. In the evening they visited the local nightspots [*mulatóhelyek*]. They learned the Hungarian *csárdás*. They went on excursions to Siófok, Almádi, Balatonfüred, and Tihany. They couldn't get enough of Balaton's beauties. They were satisfied with all things but one: the dust. They had cleared the dust from the roadway only as far as the train station; from the stretch between the station and

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<sup>180</sup> The first Graz-Szentgotthárd-Keszthely bus route opened in 1935, established through the lobbying of Hungarian officials. "Hirek," *Útitárs* 1, no. 8 (1935): 26. The disappearance of Austria meant the disappearance of favorable visa regulations on travel into Hungary, and so the sudden imposition of a 300 Reichsmark surcharge choked off the flow of tourists coming from Vienna and Graz. "A Grác-keszthelyi autóbusszal 'már' jött két vendég," *Balatoni Kurir*, June 29, 1938: 4.

the King Matthias Hotel, no. [...] One of our colleagues at this newspaper has called to the attention of the minister of commerce responsible for the Lake Balaton ring-road that this part of the highway is in need of dust removal.<sup>181</sup>

Another remarkable sign of this hospitality – heightened, surely, by the overall political climate – came in the summer of 1934. Residents “spontaneously” held memorial services for the assassinated Austrian chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss in spa towns “where Austrian guests stay in greater numbers.” “These were not handshakes organized on orders from above,” *Balaton Courier* proudly reported on its front page, “but gestures coming from the heart, of the kind that only good neighbors, good Hungarian neighbors, are capable.” Whether out of sincerity, a desire for good public relations, or both, the ceremonies entailed a view of history that avoided reflection on any bad blood that might ever have arisen between the two people. “In these requiems was the memory of a centuries-long common past, a feeling of togetherness and interdependence – the Hungarian’s pure, forthright, heartfelt way of thinking.” Despite the “tragic” circumstances, the newspaper hailed Dollfuss’s death as “an occasion for us to come together more closely.”<sup>182</sup>

There is no evidence to confirm that efforts to cater specifically to Austrian tourists were, in the end, decisive in explaining why they were the most numerous foreign travelers to Hungary. But this did not prevent Hungarian tourism promoters from arriving at that conclusion. In 1937, for example, a small group of Viennese allegedly got together to form the Balatonboglár Friends of Balaton Society (Balatonboglári Balatonbarátok Társaság), with the goals of organizing summer stays at the resort, pooling funds for a group vacation, and promoting the

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<sup>181</sup> “Osztrák vendégek Balatonkenesén,” *Balatoni Kurir*, July 19, 1933: 6.

<sup>182</sup> “Rekviemet tarottak Dollfussért,” *Balatoni Kurir*, August 1, 1934: 1.

idea among their acquaintances back home. Their motivations could all be explained, in the opinion of the reporter, by “Hungarian hospitality, friendly fellow-feeling, and the miraculous magic of Balaton.”<sup>183</sup>

The “on-the-ground” tourist connections between post-imperial Austrians and Hungarians received a silver screen moment in 1935. In *Címzett ismeretlen* [Address Unknown] (1935, dir. Béla Gaál), the young Vienna Burgtheater actor Ernst Heinz Häussermann (born in Germany) plays Toni, a cheerful, somewhat goofy orphan who comes from Vienna to lakeside resort town Balatonföldvár to work as a hotel porter. The viewer first encounters Toni as Teri (Irén Ágay), the heroine and herself an orphan, enters a train compartment: he is little more than a pair of hands, the rest of him obscured by an unfolded copy of the *Neues Wiener Journal* (a conservative paper with monarchist sympathies). Toni quickly endears himself to Teri with his goofy grin, zealous commitment to speaking (broken) Hungarian, and naïve sympathy for his Hungarian hosts. He reads aloud to her from his 1912 phrasebook on the (pointedly) outdated geography of the Kingdom of Hungary (stretching from the Carpathians to Fiume on the Adriatic) to which, in an aesthetically jarring moment of irredentist cliché, Teri responds bilingually with a sigh and a wistful stare, “Szóval... und das wird sein” (“Ah, indeed... and so it will be”). From this moment on, Toni is cemented both as Teri’s bouncy sidekick and as a model immigrant. He serves as Teri’s benignly mischievous protector (he keeps a notebook of rude or mean people upon whom he will visit his “wrath” in due time) and becomes ever more fluent in Hungarian, despite his contention, revealed in one of the film’s hit musical numbers, “Leider kann ich keine Zeile sprechen *magyarul*” (“Unfortunately I can’t speak a single line of

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<sup>183</sup> “A bécsiek már a jövő nyárra takarékoskodnak,” *Balatoni Kurir*, October 6, 1937: 5.

Magyar”).<sup>184</sup> The film, in general, reviewed very well as an uproarious comedy, but the audience at the premiere positively lapped up Toni’s struggles with their language and reserved special applause for his scenes. During the curtain call after the film, Häussermann obligingly “thanked the audience *with Hungarian words*.”<sup>185</sup>

*Címzett ismeretlen* was not exactly a movie “about” Austrian-Hungarian relations, as its main plot is a pretty-young-woman-meets-dashing-aristocrat love story typical of 1930s Hungarian cinema. Toni’s friendship with Teri is not the story’s principal relationship, though it is a central feature. It does, however, in its own way point to the confluence of interwar Austro-Hungarian connections and the Hungarian tourism business. Visually, the film exhibits Toni-like enthusiasm for showing off its setting. Lake Balaton is more than a backdrop to the plot; it is one of the reasons to watch the film. “An especially pleasing sight are the beautiful Balaton landscapes swimming in sunlight, the white sailboats gliding on the rippling water, all of the joys of Balaton in summer upon the beach,” admired one reviewer in *Pesti Napló*.<sup>186</sup> Another contemporary critic likewise hailed the abundance of location shots, which “immortalize the panoramas of the Hungarian Sea.”<sup>187</sup> Moreover, the film both draws on and reinforces the image of Lake Balaton as the site of particular leisure activities. When Teri and Toni’s train pulls into the station at Balatonföldvár, Toni excitedly and with exaggerated obviousness points at the name above the platform, upon which (from a passenger’s point of view) the camera lingers for what feels like an unnecessarily long time, as though to instruct the viewer to remember exactly

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<sup>184</sup> A press release from Művész, the studio responsible for *Címzett ismeretlen*, emphasized both these points about the character of Toni. MNFA Dossier JF 97.

<sup>185</sup> Emphasis in the original. “Címzett ismeretlen,” *Pesti Napló*, December 22, 1935: 21. More evidence of rave reviews at the opening can be found in “Gyártási hírek,” *Mozivilág*, January 7, 1936: 2 and “Pereg a film,” *Déliab*, December 28, 1935: 62. The latter called Häussermann’s role a “fortunate plus” worthy of recognition.

<sup>186</sup> “Címzett ismeretlen,” 21.

<sup>187</sup> The review comes from a clipping out of a contemporary newspaper (based on physical appearance and the character of the text), but one which the archive file does not specify. MNFA Dossier JF 97.

where all of the plot to follow will take place. Romance between Teri and her cavalier Pali (Imre Ráday) blossoms as they boat and walk the piers together; stalwart, innocent Toni, lacking a wealthy patron, is doggishly content to paddle alone in a kayak. Teri and Toni befriend Stangl, the owner of the local bicycle shop (Gyula Kabos), and dine together on carp soup – a Balaton specialty – and sing along to the lively tunes of the requisite Gypsy ensemble. The same trio ferries across the water to Tihany and joins a group of tourists (led by a guide wearing an armband from the state railway’s tourist branch, IBUSZ), each trying their voices on the famous “Tihany Echo” produced by the walls of the settlement’s historic peninsular abbey.<sup>188</sup>

Thus while the character Toni arrives in Balatonföldvár as a worker rather than a leisured traveler, he participates nonetheless in the touristic activities available to him. In this respect, he is a fair representative of the problem of defining the “stranger” as a statistic and a consumer. And though it is true, furthermore, that Toni is not a direct cinematic reflection of the Austrian tourist so prized by Balaton promoters, he does manage (unconsciously, I think) to stand in for another type of plausible historical actor. The idea of an Austrian youth heartily learning Hungarian or traveling east for employment in the service industry was not as fabricated as it might sound. The Hungarian consulate in Graz sponsored Hungarian language classes for children and teenagers (middle school and younger), in which, for the fall term of 1936, half of the 370 enrollees were not of “Hungarian origin.” In her report to the consul, the instructor noted that, of the non-Magyars, the female students expressed interest in learning the language out of a desire to work as governesses or, when encountering Hungarian tourists, “to respond to them in

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<sup>188</sup> This scene also involves a bit of tourist-industry humor. One fellow, lifting up his voice to the occasion, shouts “This is Linzmajer from Paks speaking!” To which the “echo” cheekily retorts, “This is Linzmajer... speaking.” (“Itt Linzmajer beszél Paksról!” “Itt Linzmajer beszél...”) When the gentleman, astonished, asks why the echo neglected to say where he was from, the tour guide gently reprimanded, “*Ja*, sir, you can’t ask Tihany to advertise for Paks” (“*Ja*, uram, nem kívánhatja Tihanytól, hogy reklámot csináljon Paksnak!”).

their own language.” Of the boys, the leading motivation was a conviction that should a war break out soon the “Austrian and Hungarian regiments will fight together,” and therefore it would be “advantageous” to study Hungarian.<sup>189</sup>

The foregoing examples from Hungary ought to demonstrate, to some satisfaction, the extent to which tourism promoters examined with anxious care their industry’s connections to Austria. On the flipside, there is less evidence to suggest that Austrian promoters returned the favor. And with respect to economics – as well as mental geography – there was less impetus to do so. One of the great tropes of Austrian promotional literature from this period is that Austria was the “Heart of Europe” – an image offered as though it might compensate for the loss of cartographic size and geopolitical importance after 1918 with centrality and metaphorical embodiment of the Occident itself.<sup>190</sup> So while, statistically, most tourists came from neighboring states (some parts of which were made “foreign” only recently), it was Austria’s destiny to serve the entire continent equally. It stands to reason that Hungarians, who constituted

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<sup>189</sup> Report from Hermann Némethyné, November 1, 1936, MOL K119, 12. csomó (1929-1944), 10. tétel, 170-72 / B. 2/936 szám. The following year, interest in the courses was so high (638 initial registrants) that on “pedagogical and sanitary grounds” the student body had to be winnowed down by more than two-thirds. The instructor, Mrs. Hermann Némethy, gave the following account of the students’ self-reported interests in studying Hungarian: “The aim of learning was, among the boys, of a surprisingly ideal nature, and of a practical one among the girls. The boys learned Hungarian: out of a pure interest in language, for the purposes of travel, so that in this fashion they would get closer to the Hungarian people and land; in order to be able to understand their Hungarian comrades in the event of war. The girls, with scant exception, learned for professional reasons, whereby those with limited schooling expected to find accommodation in Hungary as housemaids and nannies; those with greater schooling want to occupy themselves as governesses, language teachers, secretaries, and German stenographers. Very often, sympathy for Hungary, as well as family connections, was the stated purpose of study.” “Ungarische Sprachkurse im Schuljahr 1936/37,” MOL K119, 12. csomó (1929-1944), 10. tétel, 223-228//732/1937.

<sup>190</sup> Examples of the “Heart of Europe” cliché (and variations on the theme of centrality) are numerous in the promotional literature of the time. Here is a handful, from varied sources: Dr. M. L., “Österreich, das Herz Europas,” *Österreichische Reisezeitung* 2, no. 4 (1923): 74; Maria Mundprecht, “Unser schönes Österreich,” *Österreichs illustrierte Fremdenverkehrs- und Reisezeitung* 1, no. 2 (December, 1933): 2–4; V.O. Ludwig, ed., *Das schöne Österreich: Illustrierte Jahrbücher der Verkehrswerbung, Wirtschaft und Denkmalpflege unter fachmännischer Mitarbeit herausgegeben* (Langenzersdorf bei Wien: V.O. Ludwig, 1930); Erwin Deinlein, “Österreichische Verkehrsgeographie,” in *Handbuch für den oesterreichischen Fremdenverkehr*, 1934, ed. Bundesministerium für Handel und Verkehr, Gewerbeförderungsdienst (Vienna: Oesterreichische Gesellschaft für Fremdenverkehr, 1934), 15–20; Bundesministerium für Handel und Verkehr, *Kraftwagenfahrten der österreichischen Postverwaltung*, Summer 1936 (Vienna: Bundesministerium für Handel und Verkehr, 1936), 3.



“only” the third-largest contingent of international travelers, who could almost certainly read Germanophone tourist literature (and thus did not need their “own”), and whose currency was of similar international strength, did not inspire many special indulgences.

This cosmopolitan equanimity seems to have been less true, however, in areas where Hungarians – rich ones – congregated in comparatively large numbers. Such a place was the posh mountain resort at Semmering in Lower Austria, 75 km (47 mi) southwest of Vienna. The guest rolls published seasonally in the resort’s main tourist newspaper, *Semmeringer Nachrichten*, make it plain that Hungarians (mostly from Budapest) comprised a very sizeable proportion of the area’s hotel guests. When times were good, Hungarians could be appreciated as coming in a “flood”; when they were lean, the “loyalty of Hungary” gave hope to local businesses and Magyar was the “dominant” language floating in the alpine air.<sup>191</sup> In turn, hoteliers, along with the local spa commission, organized events celebrating – flattering, perhaps – their Hungarian clientele. Every August, the Semmering chapel held special masses on the Feast of St. Stephen (August 20), the de facto Hungarian national holiday.<sup>192</sup> So read an announcement for the 1930 edition of the mass, which also commemorated the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the accession of King (and Saint) Imre I:

It must surely be the case that it is the traditional Austrian-Hungarian friendship that explains why such great numbers of Hungarians seek out Austrian health spas and

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<sup>191</sup> On the “Zustrom” of Hungarian guests: “Rückblick auf die verflossene Sommersaison 1926,” *Semmeringer Nachrichten*, October 2, 1926: 1-2. On “die Treuen Ungarns” and “Ungarische im Kurort... dominierend ist,” see E. L., “Badesaison am Semmering,” *Semmeringer Nachrichten*, August 6, 1932: 2. Hungarians were also praised, along with Czechoslovakians, as the “most faithful regulars [Stammgäste]” in Carl Marilaun, “Semmeringer Lidozauber,” *Semmeringer Nachrichten*, August 12, 1933: 2.

<sup>192</sup> “St.-Stefans-Feier am Semmering,” *Semmeringer Nachrichten*, August 22, 1931: 1. These celebrations apparently continued on into the decade; viz. “St. Stephansfeier am Semmering,” *Semmeringer Nachrichten*, September 5, 1936: 3.

resorts. This year, as in years before, a multitude of Hungarians have arrived at Semmering as well. They constitute, it is estimated, upwards of 50 percent of the spa-guests.

The Spa Commission wishes at this time to honor Hungary by offering the Hungarians staying here the occasion and the opportunity to take part in the festivities that all of Hungary – one might say the entire cultured world – is now enjoying with such extraordinary resplendence. These are the feast of Saint Stephen and the jubilee of St. Emmerich [Imre].<sup>193</sup>

Other, less exalted tributes to the steadfast Hungarians of Semmering included at least one “Hungarian Evening” at the elegant Grand Hotel Panhans (with the theme “Reception at the Court of the Csárdás Prince,” after the Imre Kálmán operetta), featuring “Hungarian music” and “Hungarian national dances.”<sup>194</sup> After a gambling casino opened at the resort in early 1935, promoters boasted that many of the croupiers spoke the “languages of the Successor States” and, in particular, that one could take lessons on various games in Hungarian.<sup>195</sup> The *Offizielle Casino-Zeitung* (Official Casino Magazine) and betting guide available at the new casino was for the first two years of its existence, printed trilingually in German, French, and Hungarian, which also gives a pretty good idea of whom the establishment’s operators expected to have to indulge.

In summation, the post-imperial tourist connections between Austria and Hungary were numerous and influential, but they were not regarded in the same way on one end as on the other.

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<sup>193</sup> “Festfeier der Ungarn auf dem Semmering,” *Semmeringer Nachrichten*, August 16, 1930: 1.

<sup>194</sup> “Ungarischer Abend im Grand-Hotel Panhans,” *Semmeringer Nachrichten*, August 6, 1932: 2.

<sup>195</sup> Konrad Fehring, “Das Kasino im Dienste des Fremdenverkehrs,” *Semmeringer Nachrichten*, January 5, 1935: 2.

Hungarian promoters depended on Austria, and especially Vienna, as a source of customers: Austrians above all; but others as well, because, thanks in large part to the infrastructural and cultural legacies of empire, Vienna (and later Graz) was in effect the “gateway” to Hungary for Western European and transatlantic tourists. Thus it is no surprise that Hungarian tourism promoters were solicitous of both Austrian travelers and their government, a position that they only further entrenched after 1930, first on economic grounds (viz. the 1930 agreement on tourism) and then on ideological and geopolitical ones.

The fact that more Hungarians traveled to Austria than anywhere else also very strongly suggests that they judged it to be familiar, accessible, and affordable, a place that offered touristic experiences – and landscapes – that Hungary could not while being Hungary’s comfortable “near abroad.” Though they were international travelers, they were not necessarily received as “foreign,” much less as an Other in the typical understanding of the term. Indeed, one high-ranking Austrian tourism official argued that, when considering travel between Austria and Hungary, the word *Fremdenverkehr* (in its literal component meaning as “stranger traffic”) was “incorrect.” Hungarians, he said, “should feel themselves at home with us,” because “they come to us as friends, not as strangers.”<sup>196</sup> This was, to be sure, infused with the flavor of public-relations blandishment – but we would not do well to dismiss it. The legacy of empire was crucial in the forming the texture of tourism in interwar Austria and Hungary.

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<sup>196</sup> S—s, “A jó utazáshoz három dolog kell: olcsó árak, kényelem és vendégszeretet,” *Víkend Élet* 1, no. 3-4 (July, 1934): 41.

## 2.4 THE AMBIVALENT “OTHER” OF THE ANGLOPHONE TOURIST

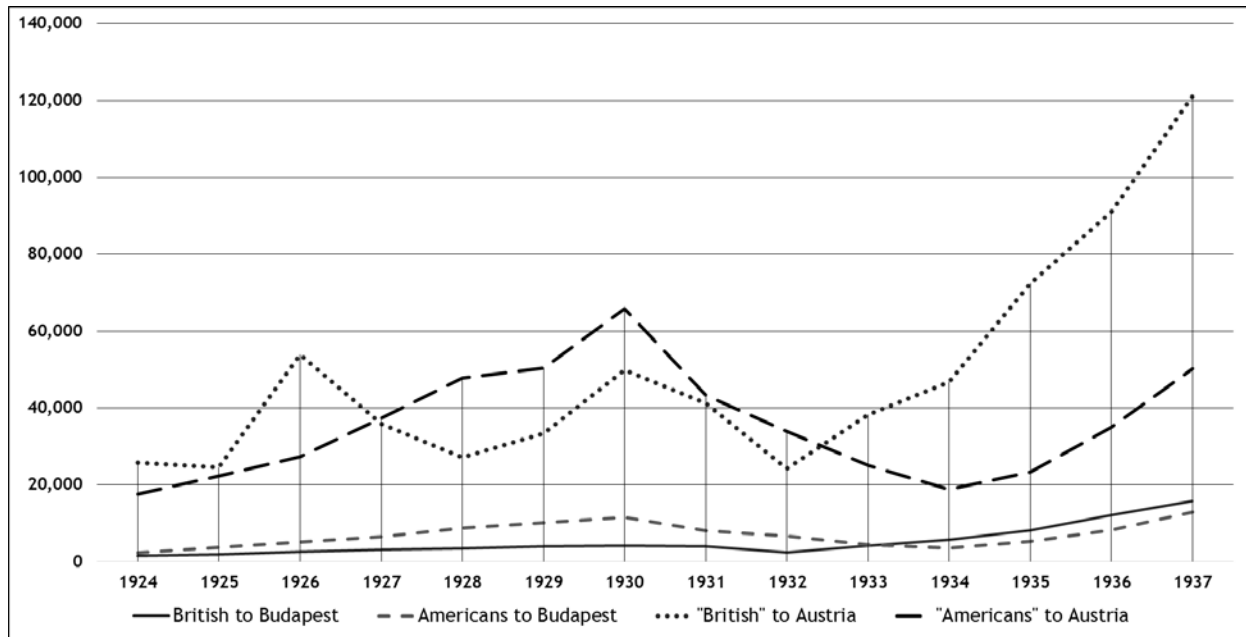
Tourists from English-speaking countries, particularly England and the United States, also fell into the circle of “close” and privileged foreigners, despite their relatively distant geographical origins. When it came to tallying successes in attracting visitors from abroad, both Austrian and Hungarian promoters considered Anglo-American tourists to be the plum prizes.

What might account for this prejudice? The answer cannot have lain in sheer numbers. Figures 3 and 4 below illustrate, in tandem, the relatively low proportion of visitors that Britons and Americans comprised. In addition to the many caveats regarding tourism statistics advanced earlier, some additional ones arise to give grief among the numbers for Austria.<sup>197</sup> First, the official tables for the years 1924-1927 inexplicably yoke arrivals from Great Britain with arrivals from France. Second, for those same years “America” includes all of North America, but beginning with 1928 only the United States and Canada are included in that category. The statistics from Hungary (which, as a reminder, only pertain to Budapest) explicitly distinguish between travelers from the United States and those not from the U.S. – but *only* U.S. numbers are provided here. Of the two charts, Figure 4 is the more revealing. As can be seen, neither Britons nor Americans (however defined) ever topped ten percent of all tourist arrivals. It is worth noting the way in which the Great Depression unequally affected traffic from the two places: Americans had an overall “advantage” over the British until ca. 1930-1931, when, clearly, the Depression discouraged travel to Europe. The sudden uptick in British arrivals,

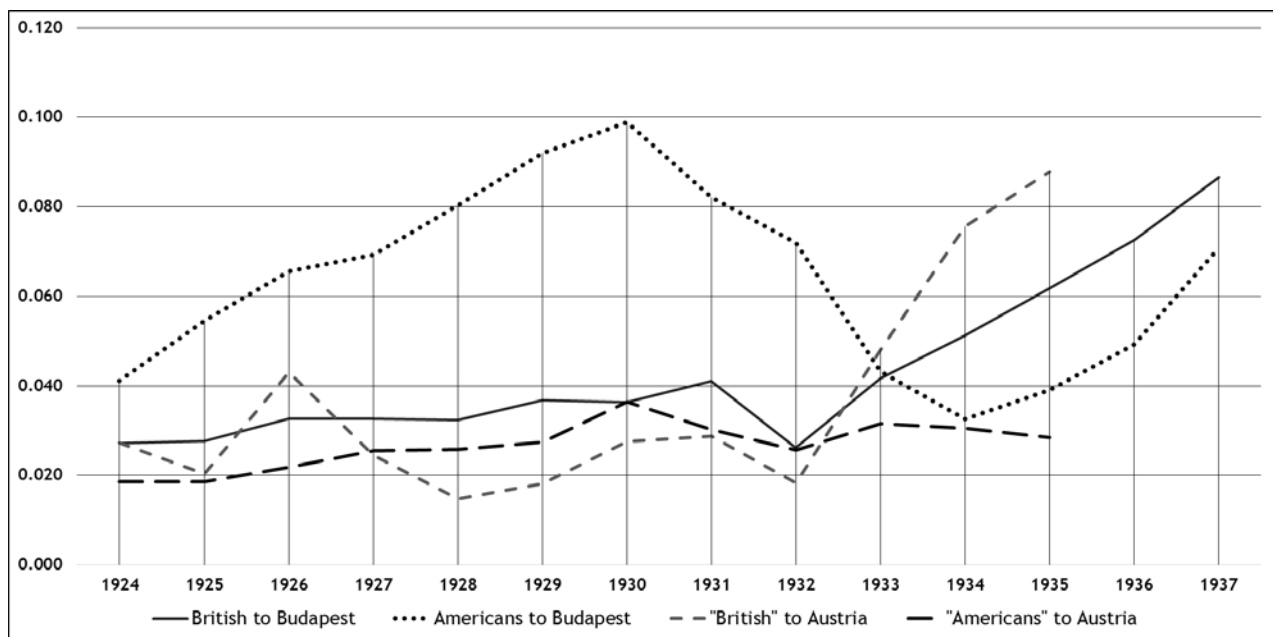
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<sup>197</sup> The sources for these tables are, as in the earlier tables, a composite of the following: Magyar Gazdaságkutató Intézet, *A magyar idegenforgalom alakulása*, 32 and 47; Kovács, “Budapest és Bécs idegenforgalma”: 756; Norval, *The Tourist Industry*, 59.; Bundesamt für Statistik, *Statistisches Handbuch für die Republik Österreich.*, 29; Otruba, *A. Hitler’s “Tausend-Mark-Sperre,”* 114.

conversely, suggests that Austria and Hungary became more attractive destinations by dint of their affordability compared to, say, Switzerland, Italy, or France.



**Figure 3. Tourist arrivals from Britain and America, 1924-1937**



**Figure 4. Tourist arrivals from Britain and America (as ratio of all arrivals), 1924-1937**

While such figures are not insignificantly small, they are not as large as attention given to Britons and Americans would have indicated. Therefore, Austrian and Hungarian tourist promoters' conspicuous affection for Anglophones must be explained by other possible factors both symbolic and financial. One may have been, simply, that a strong association existed between the English and the very concept of tourism itself. England was, after all, the birthplace of Cook's Tours, the first professionalized international tourist agency. Second, Anglophones were the bearers of stable currencies. Having emerged from the First World War not only victorious but in fact materially better off, moneyed Americans were in perhaps the best position of all to spend on European vacations – at least until 1929. To rope an Englishman or an American meant importing pounds Sterling or dollars, which were far more valuable on the international market than schillings or pengős. The benefits to hard-up Danubians were very real. Because of the hyperinflation that prevailed in Austria and Hungary until new currencies were introduced in 1925, a dollar was worth thousands upon thousands of Austrian or Hungarian crowns.<sup>198</sup> A visitor from the United States, therefore, possessed enormous purchasing power. Placing this in more human terms, the American physician J. Alexander Mahan related after his tour of Austria that “what an American tourist spends in Vienna would last... a fortnight – perhaps a month” for a single-earner Viennese family.<sup>199</sup> This point feeds directly into a third: because Americans and (to a lesser extent) Britons had to travel long distances to reach the Danubian capitals, they generally stayed longer, and brought more cash, than tourists from closer countries. Longer stays, of course, meant more money spent. It is understandable, then, how

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<sup>198</sup> Specifically, at its peak, the rate of exchange for the dollar was 79,700 Austrian *Kronen* and 80,460 Hungarian *korona*. R.L. Bidwell, *Currency Conversion Tables: A Hundred Years of Change* (London: Rex Collings, 1970), 4 and 27, respectively.

<sup>199</sup> J. Alexander Mahan, *Vienna of Yesterday and Today* (Vienna: The Vienna Times, 1928), 76.

local businessfolk might come to dream of tourists who, in their eyes, were walking dollar- and pound-signs.

These factors conspired to exalt Britons and Americans as outstandingly prosperous – the proverbial Golden Geese (or as one contemporary Hungarian observer put it, Golden Pheasants<sup>200</sup>) of the promoters' dreams. Ludwig Hirschfeld, author of a wry "insider's guide" to Vienna, observed a hierarchy of prominence at Vienna's flagship institution, the Hotel Bristol. "The clientele of the new Bristol is, before all else, rich American and English families, then any of the well-to-do international aristocrats who can still afford it these days and who always seek out the most ostentatious hotel of every city." He added to this a third group, the capitalist élite of Berlin, along with movie stars "from the West."<sup>201</sup> One Hungarian statistician rejoiced in reporting that the number of American visitors to Budapest had grown substantially by 1929, calling it the "most joyous outcome" of the period. "The incoming tourism from America is all the more significant when seen from an economic perspective," he wrote, "because the Americans spend much more time in Budapest and, being wealthier than those arriving from other countries, spend a good deal more money, too."<sup>202</sup> Locals were apparently quite ready to apply flattery in pursuit of a share of New World wealth. According to J.A. Mahan, the house bands at Viennese *Heuriger* (taverns, often connected to vineyards, where new wine is sold) would greet groups of Americans with "America" and the "Star Spangled Banner," "to which the party is supposed to respond by much applause and a substantial contribution."<sup>203</sup>

For Hungarian promoters, Anglophone tourists bore an additional political significance on top of their obvious economic one. They figured heavily into the pacific branch of the

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<sup>200</sup> "A vendégforgalom," *Vendégforgalmi Ujság*, January 15, 1939: 2.

<sup>201</sup> Ludwig Hirschfeld, *Das Buch von Wien*, Was Nicht im »Baedeker« Steht (Munich: R. Piper & Co., 1927), 75.

<sup>202</sup> Kovács, "Budapest és Bécs idegenforgalma," 760.

<sup>203</sup> Mahan, *Vienna of Yesterday and Today*, 96.

campaign to revise the peace treaty of Trianon, for every foreign guest that could be seduced by Hungarian charms was, at least potentially, a friendly voice abroad. George A. Birmingham (pseudonym of James Owen Hannay), a strongly sympathetic observer who wrote about Hungary while serving as chaplain to the British legation in Budapest, recounted a neat summation of this tendency.<sup>204</sup> “Now the Hungarians are, of all people I have met, the most sensitive to foreign criticism. They take an enormous amount of trouble over what they call ‘propaganda,’ by which they mean direct and indirect endeavors to produce a favorable impression on strangers, especially strangers who may be supposed to be influential in their own country, such as journalists and politicians. ... Even a casual and unknown tourist comes in for a share of attention, and behind the charming manners of the Hungarians there is always discernable a desire to win the good opinion of the traveler.”<sup>205</sup>

Hungarians involved in such activities privileged the British for reasons of both historical and immediate relevance. A small but powerful section of the aristocracy had indeed nursed a current of Anglophilia since the days of István Széchenyi, who sought industrialization on an English model and introduced a fascination with upper-class British culture (exemplified in clubs and horses) and manners. It also stemmed in part from a persistent, if somewhat inaccurate belief that the Kingdom of England and the Kingdom of Hungary had shared a tradition of constitutionalism since the Middle Ages. More recently, as late as 1938 Britain appeared to be the most sympathetic of the non-fascist states to Hungarian revisionist claims – or so was the

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<sup>204</sup> M. R. Bellasis, “Hannay, James Owen (1865-1950),” rev. Brian Taylor, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.pitt.idm.oclc.org/view/article/33686>, accessed 17 March 2015]

<sup>205</sup> George A. Birmingham, *A Wayfarer in Hungary* (London: Methuen & Co., 1925), 7.



hope of the Hungarian diplomatic establishment.<sup>206</sup> Hungarian revisionists saw the British as “representatives” of a (by then much weakened) world hegemon and key players in postwar diplomacy. Since it was likely that only wealthy (and therefore well-connected) Britons would make their way to Hungary, it stood to reason that they should be targets of priority in the Hungarian charm campaign.<sup>207</sup>

This is not at all to say that strategic goals could not coincide with pecuniary ones. In the imagination of prominent Budapest merchant Leó Dán, high-value tourists (whom he called “Qualitätsfremde,” using German) like Britons (and Americans) sparkled as a key to solving Hungary’s woes. Tourism was not only good for the economy, because a happy stranger was one who would help propagate good press about Hungary itself. “Every stranger who comes here... is enchanted by what [he/she] gets and what [he/she] sees. Once back home, this is not just the best and most priceless propaganda, but it also directs sympathy towards us and creates a favorable mood.” Reconquest by force of arms was hardly bound to succeed; but, Dán argued, “Our battle is half-won if we can make them take on *love* for us.” He laid out a “program” along these lines: “Develop tourism. Bring ‘Qualitäts-Fremde’ [*sic*] here, keep them here, get them to buy from us, and make them spend, spend, spend.”<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Tibor Frank, “Anglophiles: The ‘Anglo-Saxon’ Orientation of Hungarian Foreign Policy, 1930s through 1944,” *The Hungarian Quarterly*, no. 181 (2006): 60–72.

<sup>207</sup> By far the most famous (and indeed significant) episode of British sympathy for Hungarian irredentism was Lord Rothermere’s “Justice for Hungary” crusade. Rothermere used his power as press magnate (principally the *Daily Mail*) to excoriate the Treaty of Trianon on a global scale. The move caused an enormous sensation in Hungary, but ultimately it had little practical effect on international *Realpolitik*. The most permanent legacy of Rothermere’s impassioned campaign is a public fountain in Budapest, located directly adjacent to the central municipal library. For a full account, see: Miklós Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision in Hungary, 1920-1945*, trans. Thomas J. DeKornfeld and Helen D. DeKornfeld (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 2007), 103–141.

<sup>208</sup> “I.B. (Idégenforgalmi Blokk),” *Magyar Fürdőélet* 5, Nos. 19-20 (1935): 135-136. Dán got his start as a composer of operettas and popular songs before flourishing as a fur salesman and later being appointed government councilor. “Dán, Leó,” Péter Ujvári, ed., *Magyar Zsidó Lexikon* (Budapest: Magyar Zsidó Lexikon, 1929), 187.

Considerations of profit and foreign politics were not the only motivations tourist promoters displayed when reflecting on the character of English (and English-speaking) visitors. They saw the English as desirous of the familiar rather than the exotic, and took pains to show them that this is what they would find in Hungary or Austria. The English were foreign, but they were not “other.” If anything, they could be attracted through examples of national similarity, not national difference. “It is little known in Great-Britain how highly the English are esteemed by the Hungarian,” assured Cornelius (Kornél) Tábori, author of the 1928 pamphlet *What Interests Englishmen in Budapest?*<sup>209</sup> Tábori’s attempt to persuade his readers of this claim comprised a rather bizarre combination of flattering – indeed almost obsequious – cultural propaganda and a smattering of practical information, which he cemented awkwardly to the end of the text. The “Englishman” of Tábori’s imagination emerges as a stuffily highbrow figure bearing only a nominal interest in other cultures. With one hand, Tábori pointed out the “ancient and modern connections between the highest classes of the Hungarian and English nations,” referring to alleged political affinities reaching back to the Middle Ages, as well as local admiration for British artistic and scientific achievements. With the other hand, he illuminated the many ways that Englishmen could find the familiar in Budapest, as reflected in (inter alia): genteel clubs, hotels with English-speaking staff and “real English comfort,” English paintings, “every kind of food you want, from the heaviest to the lightest,” and “Hungarian products of industrial art” of the kind already “conserved among the treasures of many an English castle.”<sup>210</sup> Clearly, Tábori expected the accommodation of *English tastes* to be what most interested Englishmen in Budapest.

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<sup>209</sup> The second edition is cited here, but at one point the text declares, “Today, in 1928,” which hints pretty clearly at the original date of publication. Cornelius Tábori, *What Interests Englishmen in Budapest?*, 2nd ed. (Hungarian Association of Foreign Traffic, 1934), 10.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 14–16.

Austrian tourism promoters came to a similar conclusion. In an attempt to dissect the “psychology of travel and travelers,” Lower Austrian historical preservationist Karl Giannoni stated that there were two generalized types of foreign tourists that visited Austria: the English-American and the German. The latter type could be recognized by “an assertion of [his] own customary living conditions” – that is, the desire to make hotel accommodations “just like home” – and, consequently, the willingness to settle a more expensive bill. (The “German type,” by contrast, preferred his lodgings to exhibit a “more indigenous character” [*mehr ursprüngliche Eigenart*] and, regardless of any “discriminating” taste, avoided staying in big cities.)<sup>211</sup> As for what might interest Englishmen in Austria, the state tourism agency posited that they were drawn to art history and, obscurely, “questions of constitutional law.”<sup>212</sup> This last assertion comes as something of a surprise, since the idea that England served as a model of statecraft was a far stronger trope in Hungarian tourist literature. Besides, it is hardly clear just what kind of Austrian locale would satisfy a craving for constitutional law. This, after all, was the land of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century “absolutism” (enlightened or otherwise), of late Habsburg parliamentary paralysis, and, with the advent of Dollfuss, a fundamentally anti-parliamentarian state.

However selective (or specious) these narratives of cultural compatibility might have been, the quest to butter up the British (and Americans) may not have been in vain. One can find sympathetic English and Irish travel writers who were quite ready to avow that either Austria or Hungary (or both) was not only a welcoming destination but, indeed, despite whatever exotic character it might otherwise have, exhibited something quintessentially “British” about it. Anticipating that his English readers would be inclined towards disgust at the Baroque

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<sup>211</sup> Karl Giannoni, *Fremdenverkehr und Heimatschutz*, Dürerbund Oesterreichische Flugschriftenreihe 1 (München: G.D.W. Callwey, 1926), 4–5.

<sup>212</sup> Bundesministerium für Handel und Verkehr, Gewerbeförderungsdienst, ed., *Handbuch für den oesterreichischen Fremdenverkehr, 1934* (Vienna: Oesterreichische Gesellschaft für Fremdenverkehr, 1934), 59.

architecture that dominates Vienna, G. E. R. Gedye offered that they were “still going to be happy with Austria” because it was “full of Austrians, among whom it is quite impossible for any Englishman to feel strange for long.” His explanation for this, somewhat unusually, was couched in an appeal to imperial fellow-feeling. “Like ourselves,” he generously expounded, “they have known what it is to rule a great Empire, not by force but by compromise: they have the breadth of outlook which this must inevitably bring. [...] Austria never ruled the world, but she is to-day a Great Power retired from business, with whom one who is still in the trade will find much to talk over.”<sup>213</sup> What such a conversation might sound like, or even how it would come about, is something Gedye leaves to the imagination; but it is a notable and arguably magnanimous gesture to extend toward a population with whom Britons were at war little more than a decade earlier. (One might sense that it also has the ring of a *memento mori* directed at an audience whose own empire was beginning to face ever-strengthening challenges to its “rule by compromise” in India, Ireland, and the Middle East.)

Some Anglophone writers claimed to find even more definite reflections of Britannia manifested in the bodies and manners of the people they encountered in Danubia. Gedye, for his part, saw in the men of Vienna the lingering influence of British diplomacy from over a century before. He observed that the city maintained a “devotion to English male fashions,” which he interpreted to be have been a legacy of the Congress of Vienna.<sup>214</sup> To the Irish novelist John Brophy, a very self-consciously subjective admirer of Budapest, the Hungarians threatened to out-English the English themselves and lead the traveler “into believing [himself] back in England.” As he explained it, this was because “almost all Hungarians, both men and women, dress in a style we like to think of as English. In fact, the general level of taste in dress and

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<sup>213</sup> G. E. R. Gedye, *A Wayfarer in Austria*, 3rd ed. (London: Methuen & Co., 1929), 34.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

outward behavior is much the same as that of the small minority in England who uphold, against the influence of the cinema and hysterical press, the English pre-war conception of quiet and decent behavior.”<sup>215</sup> Moreover, Brophy alleged that native Anglophones would find relief in Hungary from the burden of hearing (and possibly speaking) other languages, as “*so many people speak English.*” This, in combination with Hungarians’ sartorial proclivities, meant that “everywhere in the streets you see people, men and women, whom you’d take for English unless you knew you were in Hungary.”<sup>216</sup> While Brophy in his rather idiosyncratic account (which is framed – sometimes to discomforting effect – as a kind of dialogue with Ilonka, a fictional idealization of an attractive young Hungarian woman) more than once avows that his opinions are his alone, he seems to have fallen under *some* influence of the Hungarian tourism-propaganda complex. He was friends with Kornél Tábori (he of *What Interests Englishmen in Budapest?*) and his son, Pál, who authored an obviously tendentious volume, *The Real Hungary* (1939).<sup>217</sup>

Sometimes promoters strained to package even what was *exotic* about Hungary in Anglo-friendly wrappers. The literature on Hungary, produced both internally and externally, often employed a subtle trope by which Anglo-Saxons are presumed averse to (or incapable of) eating spicy foods. Clearly, this was a point of concern when trying to entice tourists to a country that lived and died on paprika. Repeatedly, authors of guidebooks and travelogues seem to feel compelled to defend Hungary’s “national spice” from assumptions that it is too fiery for English-speaking tongues and, it seems, from being confused for much sharper varieties being falsely

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<sup>215</sup> John Brophy, *Ilonka Speaks of Hungary: Personal Impressions and an Interpretation of the National Character* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1936), 14.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 20–21.

<sup>217</sup> The Táboris are mentioned on multiple occasions, but the most direct evidence of their acquaintance with Brophy emerges when they “kidnap” him for a trip to Lake Balaton. *Ibid.*, 168.

marketed abroad under the name “paprika.”<sup>218</sup> Such moves very well could have been responses to Anglophone self-stereotyping, perhaps amplified by (if not necessarily born of) literary travel writing, guidebooks, and other works on Eastern Europe. (In *Dracula*, for instance, that fin-de-siècle masterpiece of armchair tourism and Orientalist horror, Jonathan Harker’s first reported meal in Transylvania is “paprika hendl,” which, foreshadowing the reactions of the interwar promotional literature, he calls “very good, but thirsty,” and which eventually drives him to drain an entire carafe of water.<sup>219</sup> Harker also suspects the paprika of inspiring “all sorts of queer dreams,” which itself foreshadows the greater nightmare to come.<sup>220</sup>)

## 2.5      FEARS OF (OTHERS’) IGNORANCE IN HUNGARIAN NATIONAL PROMOTION

But for as much as Hungarian tourism promoters, in particular, coveted the patronage of Anglophone guests, at the same time they were afflicted by a peculiar kind of anxiety. They seemed to both fear and expect that “strangers” were simply ignorant, or at best misinformed, about Hungary. This was one of the Magyars’ many crosses to bear after 1918, but promoters

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<sup>218</sup> G.E.R. Gedye proclaimed that paprika was “not as hot as it looks”; John Brophy and Pál (Paul) Tábori (who were acquainted with one another) both took pains to stress that curry powder (and, in Brophy’s case, also cayenne pepper) was much fiercer than Hungarian paprika; Tábori, along with his father Kornél, differentiate the paprika used, if not made, in Hungary from a hotter kind of “paprika” (perhaps from Spain or else another pepper labelled as such) used in other countries. Incidentally, it isn’t always apparent whether these writers are talking about *édes* or *csemege* (sweet or “delicate”) paprika, as opposed to *csípős* (spicy); the former registers at the very lowest end of the Scoville scale (0–400 heat units) and the latter as much as a grade below Tabasco (ca. 2,500 heat units). Gedye, *A Wayfarer in Austria*, 11; Paul Tábori, *The Real Hungary* (London: Skeffington & Son, 1939), 126–127; Tábori, *What Interests Englishmen in Budapest?*, 14; see also Municipal Information Office, *Budapest: All That Is Interesting in the Hungarian Capital* (Budapest: Printing Office of the Municipality of Budapest, 1927), 27. The Scoville measurements for Hungarian paprika come from “Chili Kalauz Scoville,” accessed February 20, 2015, <http://people.inf.elte.hu/nedtaai/capsiacin.html>.

<sup>219</sup> Bram Stoker, *The Annotated Dracula: Dracula by Bram Stoker*, ed. Leonard Wolf (New York: Ballantine Books, 1975), 1 and 5.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

were hopeful that good propaganda and increased tourism would help the rest of the world realize what it was missing.<sup>221</sup> To an extent, the problem went hand-in-hand with a more general fear among the Hungarian political élite that the lingering effects of the war, along with hostile propaganda from the Little Entente, continued to warp the perspective of potentially sympathetic outsiders, especially those in Britain and the United States.<sup>222</sup> Another aspect of the situation, however, reveals an interesting post-imperial dynamic at work within international tourism. Not only did Austria remain Hungary's "gateway" for Western tourists, but the disappearance of the Habsburgs had not granted Hungary true and complete *conceptual* independence from Austria in the minds of those same travelers.

Even well into the 1930s, Hungarian tourism promoters were plagued by a fear that most foreigners from outside eastern and central Europe had yet to divorce (or even distinguish between) the two halves of the Dual Monarchy on their own mental maps. Although Britons or Americans were not the only offenders – émigré author Paul Tabori claimed that a "fat and vulgar" Dutchman once sent him into a "cold rage" by conflating Hungary and Austria<sup>223</sup> – the

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<sup>221</sup> Here is a typical passage reflecting this line of thinking: "The smaller, more unknown, more isolated a country is, the greater the necessity that it secure foreign friends for itself. In Hungary, such movement as this is given even more significance by the circumstance that until only last year the outside world [külföld] scarcely knew of our level of cultural development, our artistic treasures, our natural beauties, our healing springs – in a word, all those things that can be seriously counted as touristic values." Elemér Miklós, *Az utazás művészete* (Budapest: Pfeifer Ferdinánd (Zeidler Testvérek) Nemzeti Könyvkereskedése, 1934), 18.

<sup>222</sup> Viz. Albert Apponyi's speech at the founding assembly of the Magyar Külügyi Társaság (Hungarian Foreign Affairs Society) in 1920, in which he declared the need to improve Hungary's image (to put it in modern terms) in the eyes of the Western powers, referring to the infamous success of the Czech/Slovak nationalists. "That giant propaganda campaign which for years hostile currents and neighboring countries have launched is truly impressive, although decidedly troublesome for us. In my hand was an English volume, which especially represented the Czech demands. For us it wasn't so much the volume's content that was interesting, but rather the bibliography attached to it, the list of all those writings which at the last moment the Czech and the rest of the neighboring states against us had summoned to justify their trumped-up demands and accusations." Transcribed in "A Magyar Külügyi Társaság megalakulása," *Külügyi Szemle* 1, no. 1 (1920): 12. See also: Miklós Zeidler, "A magyar külpolitika és a civil társadalom a Horthy-korszakban," in *Magyarország helye a 20. századi Európában: Tanulmányok*, ed. Pál Pritz, Balázs Sipos, and Miklós Zeidler (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 2002), 50–63; Holly Case, *Between States: The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea during World War II* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 39–53; Nagy, "Grand Delusions: Interwar Hungarian Cultural Diplomacy, 1918-1941."

<sup>223</sup> Tabori, *The Real Hungary*, 9–10. The incident with the Dutchman is, notably, the book's opening episode.

trope of the Anglophone traveler unable to tell a Hungarian from an Austrian resurfaced from time to time in literature both for and about tourism. Take, for example, the sudden reprimand wedged in among the blandishments of Tábori's *What Interests the Englishman in Budapest*: "Do not always mix up Hungary with Austria. The Hungarians are quite a different race, they have their own language, even though nearly everybody understands German."<sup>224</sup> An identical lesson, more subtly conveyed, appears in the very first of Fodor's guidebooks. Lajos Zilahy narrates his chapter on Hungary in the first person, wrapping it around the frame of an acquaintanceship with Miss Betty Ginton, a red-haired, green-eyed bachelorette of unspecified Anglophone origins, whom he meets at an English dinner party. In the opening scene, Zilahy and Ginton have an "argument," really a kind of flirtatious guessing-game, in which Ginton attempts to discern Zilahy's nationality. She guesses Dutch, then Austrian, and ends up going through "a list of all European nations." When Zilahy divulges that he is Hungarian, she "[begins] to protest with such a righteous indignation as if she had caught me cheating at cards."

"Excuse me, I *did* say that!"

"You did not."

[...]

"But I *did* say it. I said you were an Austrian, didn't I?"

"Oh, well. I might as well say in turn that you are Portuguese."

"Why? Surely Austrians and Hungarians are the same. Don't you speak German in Budapest?"

I seized her arm:

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<sup>224</sup> Tábori, *What Interests Englishmen in Budapest?*, 14.



“For God’s sake, Miss Ginton, don’t make that statement again and aloud. It is the greatest mistake, which originates from the fact that the Austrians and the Hungarians had formed a monarchy for several centuries, under the same dynasty: the Habsburgs. But that does not mean that the Hungarians belong to the Germanic race or that the Hungarian language is a German dialect. We Hungarians are the most lonely people in Europe.”

Miss Ginton’s error, one notices, has no ill effects on Zilahy’s opinion of Anglophones. He professes a “great love for the spirit and traditions of the English home and for the Englishman in general.” The feeling, at least nationally speaking, is mutual: in the closing lines of the chapter, we learn that Miss Ginton has married a Hungarian and given up London for Budapest.<sup>225</sup>

Anecdotes in this vein did not appear only in literature created for consumption abroad. In 1936, industry insider Jenő Czenner reported to *Magyar Szemle*, the preeminent current affairs journal of the conservative establishment, on the activity of Hungarian tourist agencies operating abroad. He recounted a sorrowful episode from 1929, in which he tested the knowledge of an agent at London’s Piccadilly Square:

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<sup>225</sup> Lajos Zilahy, “Hungary,” in Eugene Fodor, ed., 1936... *On the Continent*, Reprint (New York: Fodor’s Travel Guides, 1985), 821-822, 851.

Tentatively, I posed the question of whether, by chance, it also would be worthwhile to visit Hungary on my Central European tour.

“Quite so,” came the reply. “If you are in Vienna, you should spend a day in Budapest. It will be very interesting.”

“But outside of Budapest,” I inquired further, “might you perhaps know of another interesting location in Hungary?”

After a brief, troubled silence I got my response.

“Yes, indeed: Salzburg.”<sup>226</sup>

On the other hand, of course, such confusion and ignorance was not necessarily as one-sided as Hungarian promoters insisted. If a potential tourist (or anyone else) happened to confuse post-Habsburg Hungary for a part of Austria, it would not bespeak excellent knowledge of Austria itself, either. Indeed, there is some evidence suggesting the Austrian republic, like the rump-monarchy of Hungary, was also at the mercy of foreigners’ groggily Orientalist sense of geopolitics in the new east-central Europe. The English journalist G. E. R. Gedye opened his travelogue *A Wayfarer in Austria* with a wry indictment of Habsburg statesman Klemens von Metternich for forever branding Vienna as the place where “Asia begins” and, consequently, as on the Far Eastern periphery of western Europeans’ mental maps of their continent. Metternich’s *bon mot*, said Gedye, created the “legend of ‘distant Austria,’” a place avoided by travelers because of its miscalculated farness from London or Paris. The legend outlived its parent empire. “Memories of the polyglot monarchy of Austria-Hungary help to maintain the illusion of distance. Did not some of its former subjects wear turbans and pray in mosques to Allah? Did not

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<sup>226</sup> Jenő Czenner, “Magyar idegenforgalmi irodák külföldön,” *Magyar Szemle* 25 (1935): 257.

its Magyar subjects talk an Asiatic language resembling no other known tongue? Did not others talk the language of the Serbs, which prints itself in looking-glass characters? How, then, can its capital be accessible or its inhabitants comprehensible?” Gedye also remarked that a German diplomat once related “that he had quite lost count of the number of English friends who, on hearing that he was going to Vienna, asked him if he had learnt the language, and refused to believe that in acquiring his mother tongue he had simultaneously learnt ‘Austrian.’”<sup>227</sup>

## 2.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In its exploration of (some) of the ways in which interwar Austrian and Hungarian tourism promoters conceived of, and imagined their relations with, the travelers they sought to attract, this chapter has uncovered two major tendencies hitherto unexplored in any great detail by scholars in the field. The first is the very basic, yet freighted, question of *who* counted as a “tourist,” and indeed *what* a tourist even was. As we have seen, the parameters of the question were not entirely settled in the industry practices of the 1920s-1940s. The standard categorization as “stranger” not only begged the question of what activities distinguished a leisure traveler from an employee, student, etc., it also sparked contemporary debate over the hospitability (and “national purity”) of the word itself. Second, it is clear that “stranger” by itself could not capture the myriad attitudes towards specific kinds of travelers – especially those who tourism promoters cast as nationally sympathetic “friends.” The structures and discourses of Austrian-Hungarian tourist traffic, and moreover the influence of politics on tourism promotion, provide a crucial

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<sup>227</sup> Gedye, *A Wayfarer in Austria*, 1–2.

case-in-point. The privileging of British and American tourists as rare but extremely desirable guests provides a second. Many other cases await detailed exploration (attitudes towards Jews as “strangers” in multiple senses; the construction of urban guests in rural spaces as “strange,” and vice versa), but these two help point the way. The following two chapters will adopt some of the themes addressed here and apply them to dimensions of domestic tourism.

### 3.0 COLORBLIND CATS VERSUS PROVINCIAL PATRIOTS: DOMESTIC TOURISM AND THE CONCEPT OF “HOMELAND”<sup>1</sup>

To be from Austria or from Hungary in 1920 did not mean all of the same things it might have before November 1918. The reformulation of these states as geopolitical constructs led in short order to their re-conception as cultural ones. Coming to terms with changes to where the new state began and ended on a map forced its inhabitants to think differently about where their own little part of it fit into the whole, how all of the other little parts fit with each other, and how the entire ensemble fit within the grander picture of “European civilization.” This chapter examines the relationship between domestic tourism (i.e. travel between two or more points within the same country) and the construction of national, provincial, and other place-based identities. Tourism promoters in Hungary were much more eager to argue for a connection between successful nation-building and the success of their industry and attempted to motivate travelers by pricking a guilty patriotic conscience. The situation in Austria was more complicated. Promoters there almost never felt the need to mobilize the rhetoric of national identity in order to get more Austrians to travel, yet tourism was tied closely to a growing interest in studying, defining, and contesting the meaning of *Heimat*.

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<sup>1</sup> Some portions of this chapter contain text previously published in Andrew Behrendt, “Educating Apostles of the Homeland: Tourism and Honismeret in Interwar Hungary,” *Hungarian Cultural Studies* 7 (2014): 159–76, doi:10.5195/ahca.2014.168.

In examining these divergent responses to a situation with many commonalities, it becomes apparent that post-imperial Austrian and Hungarian tourism promoters not only operated within two different economic environments; they also inhabited cultures with two different conceptions of “homeland.” Although these cultures shared certain intellectual traditions, the paths they followed were not the same. Hungarian tourism promoters subscribed to an idea of “homeland” that was bounded by the territorial and conceptual frontiers of *Magyarság* – the whole Hungarian nation – and considered everyone and every place within those lines to be made, with only limited variation, of the same ethnic “stuff.” For Austrian promoters, the homeland was characterized, dissonantly, by a dualism of the specific and the general. On one hand there was the *Heimat* of village, region, or province: its horizons narrower, its borders less inclusive, and its people grouped around more intimate categories of belonging than in the Hungarian homeland. On the other hand, there was the entirety of the German *Volk*, to which every little Austrian *Heimat* belonged. The result was an Austria that was fundamentally “German” and composed of multiple coexisting homelands.

This chapter will, first, outline the common intellectual foundations of the Austrian and Hungarian models of “homeland” that influenced the respective domestic tourism industry of either country in the 1920s and 1930s. Those fundaments were established through “homeland studies,” or the academic and pedagogical fields of knowledge that scholars – professional and amateur – pursued to understand the many dimensions of the places to which they claimed belonging. The chapter then reveals some of the direct intersections between homeland studies and tourism, namely in the contributions that scholars and activists made to the tourism literature. Next, the chapter looks in detail at programs and institutions, sponsored by or affiliated with the state, that sought to encourage domestic travel by using the rhetoric of

homeland. In Hungary, these were the *filléres gyors*, or “penny express” discount-fare program launched by the state railway in 1931 and the School Excursion Trains of the Capital City of Budapest, an educational initiative inspired in part by the penny express system and organized by the Budapest municipal government. The Austrian state, for its part, encouraged Austrians to explore the homeland via the postal bus service and, later, the *Ständestaat*’s structured-leisure program, Neues Leben. In a broad way, this chapter hopes to show how tourism promoters’ perception of structures and patterns in the tourist economy influenced – and was influenced by – their interpretations of “homeland.”

### 3.1 FAITHLESS HUNGARIANS AND STALWART AUSTRIANS

In the eyes of domestic tourism promoters, interwar Hungarians were an unfaithful, ignorant lot. They spurned the beautiful vistas and rich culture of their own downtrodden country for the beguilements of other European lands. Tens, even hundreds of thousands of them flocked to Austria, Italy, Germany, Czechoslovakia, and elsewhere for mountain air, fashionable company, or to satisfy the impulse of habit by visiting the familiar summertime haunts of the old Dual Monarchy. Season after season, Hungarian travelers abroad carried off more money than foreign travelers brought in, the negative balance exceeding, on average, twelve million pengő from 1932 through 1937.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, Hungary’s vacation spots forlornly awaited vacationers. As one resident of the Lake Balaton resort town Keszthely complained to his local newspaper in 1934,

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<sup>2</sup> Márta Juszti, “‘Utazgassunk hazánk földjén!’: A belföldi turizmus problémái a két világháború között Magyarországon,” *Korall* 26 (2006): 195.

“there is bright sunshine playing on blue Balaton’s waves, the water is 21 degrees [Celsius], the ripening sun brings a flood of Hungarian fruit, the hotels are open – and there are no guests.”<sup>3</sup>

The protectionist economic policies common in the interwar years transformed the “tourist experience” into the ideal commodity for small, protectionist east-central European states with limited industrial capacities. When packaged and marketed abroad, it was a wonderful “export,” for it derived from a limitless, domestically extracted raw material – the charms of a specific national character – that could only be consumed properly at the site of its production. Foreign tourists, especially those from the more affluent west, who carried wallets full of valuable currencies and appetites for exotic cultures, were thus the perfect “imports.” Attracting too few of them was a problem; but, from the point of view of those in the tourist industry, failing to keep the citizens of one’s own country from becoming another country’s import was just as bad – if not worse. Not only did they not put cash into the domestic economy; they took it abroad to enrich foreign treasuries.

For many in the Hungarian tourism industry, therefore, the far more insidious threat to its survival came from within the borders of the country. As the shock of global economic depression cut deep into global tourist traffic starting in 1930-31, the market of potential travelers shrank, and the loss of tourists to other countries grew into an even grimmer menace. It was in these very circumstances that the journal *Magyar Fürdőélet* (Hungarian Spa Life) launched. Serving as the (apparently) unofficial mouthpiece of several major umbrella organizations<sup>4</sup> in the tourism industry, the publication’s editors positioned it as both a promotional device and a moral compass, pointing Hungarian vacationers away from the

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<sup>3</sup> Béla Horváth, “Mondja Szerkesztő Úr!,” *Balatoni Kurír*, September 19, 1934: 5.

<sup>4</sup> These were, namely, the Balaton Intéző Bizottság, which concerned itself with developing the spa towns ringing Lake Balaton, and the tourism section of the Baross Szövetség, an association of businessmen and industrialists.



temptations of foreign locales.<sup>5</sup> In a manifesto published in its debut number, the magazine lamented that 150,000 Hungarians spent 150 million pengős abroad each year, and that, quite perversely, Hungarian was frequently heard on the funicular railways of Switzerland, in the Thuringian forest, and Norway's North Cape. At the same time, however, it declared that the depression had shut the "gate leading abroad." It hailed (with a certain bitter irony) the imminent prospect of Hungarians finally vacationing at home out of the sheer hardship of not being able to do it elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> Such hope, alas, was premature. *Magyar Fürdőélet* reported with dismay that the Hungarian National Bank, which regulated the flow of currency to other countries, had released 25 million pengős to travelers going abroad for the 1933 Easter season. The journal inveighed that the fault was not in the bank's policies but in the "spirits" of Hungarians themselves, who two-facedly preached the gospel of vacationing at home while champing at the bit to return to foreign climes. "Cultural actions" were necessary, it judged, to cure the Hungarian public's "madness" for wanting to go abroad with more "realistic considerations" of staying at home.<sup>7</sup>

What, then, was to blame for the sorry state of domestic tourism in Hungary? Some in the industry believed that the comparatively undeveloped tourist infrastructure – bad roads, uneven and unreliable railway coverage, unattractive resorts, obsolete hotels – offered few reasons for any Hungarian traveler who could afford to go abroad to do otherwise.<sup>8</sup> Others recognized that the prevailing socio-economic conditions of the country prevented would-be tourists from having

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<sup>5</sup> But many of its pages went to serialized novellas, love advice columns, and other entertaining fare – a common practice among popular Hungarian and Austrian tourist magazines of the period. Occasionally, this mission to entertain conflicted with the mission to evangelize domestic travel: witness the January 15, 1932 issue (Vol. 2, No. 1), in which the lead article, complaining about a lack of appreciation for the country's natural wonders, cohabited with an article about ski lessons in the Austrian Alps.

<sup>6</sup> –y –l, "Programmunk," *Magyar Fürdőélet* 1 (1931): 5.

<sup>7</sup> "Husvétii idegenforgalmi vérveszteségünk," *Magyar Fürdőélet* 3 (1933): 219–220.

<sup>8</sup> For representative examples, see: István Kallós, *A magyar idegenforgalom új utjai* (Budapest: A Magyar Cobden Szövetség, 1934); Sándor Károlyi, *A magyar idegenforgalom jövője* (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1936), 107–112.

the money or time to travel, lobbying, for instance, to extend the weekend and expand its institutionalization.<sup>9</sup> The predominant complaint, however, was that Hungarians simply didn't know or think enough about their country. They didn't appreciate the variety, beauty, or affordability of its tourist destinations. They had not seen enough of Hungary to have gotten to know it; and because they did not know it, they failed to go out and see it.

According to the discourse put forward by industry boosters, this circular trap of ignorance and feeble patriotism threatened to stifle the nascent development of Hungarian tourism. The problem was more than one of weak advertising – although industry experts blamed this, too. It was a question of basic national awareness. “It is possible to say without fear of contradiction,” declared *Magyar Fürdőélet* in an editorial from 1932,

that wherever anyone in any part of our little country steps out of their house, or even just peers out their window at the nearest horizon: there they will come up against a natural treasure, if they watch with open eyes. Natural treasures that virtually no one seems to know about and which nobody hurries to reveal or exploit for the common or individual good. In this, we are like the colorblind cat that sees the forms of things clearly, yet their *colors* do not exist while they are looked upon. The exquisitely beautiful red rose looks just as gray as the dried-out leaf of a tree.<sup>10</sup>

To be sure, Hungarian tourism promoters were animated by a desire for good business and shaken in no small measure by the same *horror vacui* that afflicted travel industries the

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<sup>9</sup> This was the original purpose of the Országos Magyar Weekend Egyesület, which is the focus of Chapter 4. One statement of the group's position can be found in one of the first articles published in its indicatively-titled newspaper: “A magyar weekend,” *Weekend*, June 26, 1932.

<sup>10</sup> “Magyarország--Fürdőország,” *Magyar Fürdőélet* 2, no. 1 (1932): 4.

world over. Global economic depression after 1929 brought the blight of empty hotel beds, empty train carriages, and empty resorts, all of which portended ever more vacant coffers. This was perhaps especially true for the hard-currency-strapped, semi-industrialized countries of east-central Europe, whose politicians and businessmen struggled to expand the profitable traffic of both international and domestic leisure travelers. In Hungary, however, the threat of another kind of vacancy motivated tourist promoters to ply their trade. They saw it as their charge not only to fill beds, trains, and resorts, but to fill Hungarian minds with an appreciation of what they imagined to be a woefully unknown landscape.

In their trepidation, hoteliers, railroad officials, spa doctors, and civic boosters were not alone, however. Their laments were part of – and reinforced by – a larger discourse of national self-unawareness propagated by geographers, educators, historians, and others. This was the discourse of *honismeret*, translatable (imperfectly) as “knowledge of one’s homeland.” Some nationalist intellectuals, seeking to explain the catastrophes of war, revolution, and partition that had recently laid Hungary low, arrived at the conclusion that their compatriots had been ignorant of Hungary’s physical and cultural landscapes and therefore emotionally disconnected from them. When crisis came, Hungarians had lacked the heart to defend Hungarian soil, because a land unknown was a land unloved. It would be a prerequisite of national resurgence to enlighten Hungarians about the territory of the nation in a way that would engender their affection – and willingness to fight – for it.

In Austria, by contrast, this rhetoric of national ignorance and disloyalty was almost entirely absent from the language of tourism promotion. One suspects that this is due at least in part to a number of “objective” and otherwise structural causes. The Austrian tourism industry was, simply put, more robust than the Hungarian. It was more developed, enjoying greater

capital accumulation and therefore a superior infrastructure; it had a longer history of dedicated local and central organization; and it did a much greater volume of business. Judging industry capacity by number of beds available to tourists, Austria dwarfed Hungary by a ratio of well over seventeen to one.<sup>11</sup> Over 39 per cent of all Austrian tourist beds (142,225 beds in 1934) were in rented spaces in private homes, meaning that a portion of the general housing stock in Austria made a major contribution to the national tourism infrastructure. This was very different from the situation in Hungary, although, as will be explored in the following chapter, some Hungarian promoters campaigned hard to follow the Austrian model.

Hungarian promoters found themselves playing catch-up not only with the tourism pioneers in Switzerland, Great Britain, and Italy, but with those in Austria as well. Formal organization of the tourism industry appeared in these places considerably earlier than in Hungary. The Budapest Metropolitan Tourism Office was founded in 1916; the semi-centralized State Tourism Council (Országos Idegenforgalmi Tanács) appeared in 1928; and the Hungarian State Tourism Office (Országos Magyar Idegenforgalmi Hivatal) formed only in 1935.<sup>12</sup> The more firmly-rooted spa culture of Austria, on the other hand, meant that strong municipal and regional centers of organization had been developing throughout the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, since each resort town worth its medicinal salt had a *Kurkommission* to manage common affairs and coordinate publicity.<sup>13</sup> In 1908, the Ministry of Public works appointed Albert Geßmann to be the first so-called “minister of tourism” of the Austrian half of the monarchy, and provided him a

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<sup>11</sup> This ratio (more precisely 17.6:1) is based on numbers for 1934. Number of beds in Austria, according to the state statistical office: 359,083; for Hungary, based on the estimates of contemporary tourism industry experts: 20,400. See: Bundesamt für Statistik, *Statistisches Handbuch für den Bundesstaat Österreich*, vol. XVI (Vienna: Bundesamt für Statistik, 1936), 31, and Kallós, *A magyar idegenforgalom új utjai*, 5.

<sup>12</sup> Márta Juszti, “A turizmus története a két világháború között Magyarországon” (Ph.D. dissertation, Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem, 2002), 140–144.

<sup>13</sup> The first dedicated tourism organization was founded in Styria in 1879; 100 municipalities followed suit by 1882. C.M. Peniston-Bird, “The Debate on Austrian National Identity in the First Republic (1918-1938)” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of St. Andrews, 1997), 364 and 364fn21.

budget of 500,000 crowns for infrastructural investment and advertising.<sup>14</sup> In 1923, the office was folded into the new Ministry of Trade and Tourism.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps most decisive of all was the fact that, sociologically, historically, and geographically speaking, Austrians were more likely to vacation domestically. The Austrian middle class was larger and better-established than the one next door,<sup>16</sup> and its longstanding tradition of the *Sommerfrische* – a refreshing summer retreat to alpine air and mountain lakes – was cherished among the Viennese burghers who could afford it.<sup>17</sup> Finally, but not least of all, the post-imperial borders of Austria retained (with the notable exceptions of Karlsbad/Karlovy Vary and Marienbad/Mariánské Lázně) much of the prime locations that had spurred tourism development before 1914. Thus there were far more venues for recreation than comparatively flat and arid Hungary, which lost the spas and highlands of Slovakia and Transylvania after 1920 – a fate that Hungarian tourism promoters frequently bemoaned until the re-annexation of those territories beginning in 1938 and 1940, respectively.

The upshot, then, was a relatively favorable situation for the domestic tourism market. One industry newspaper from Lower Austria noted that, “While the foreigners can be brought

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<sup>14</sup> Alois Brusatti, *100 Jahre österreichischen Fremdenverkehr: historische Entwicklung, 1884-1984* (Vienna: Bundesministerium für Handel, Gewerbe und Industrie, 1984), 93.

<sup>15</sup> Peniston-Bird, “The Debate on Austrian National Identity in the First Republic (1918-1938),” 364 and 364fn21.

<sup>16</sup> Admittedly this is a tricky comparison to make, since the definition of the “middle class” in modern Hungary (pre-1945) has long been a topic of intense debate – much of which has revolved around the “problem” of a “non-indigenous” (i.e. non-Jewish) middle stratum. For an overview: Iván T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1998), 32–40. However, one rough-and-ready pair of estimates can give us something to work from. Ernst Hanisch puts the Austrian middle class (*Mittelschicht*) at 11.5 percent of the population in 1934, cf. Gábor Gyáni’s proposal of an “educated middle class” of 5.6 percent in Hungary in 1920. Ernst Hanisch, *Der lange Schatten des Staates: Österreichische Gesellschaftsgeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert* (Vienna: Ueberreuter, 1994), 67; Gábor Gyáni, “Social History of Hungary in the Horthy Era,” in *Social History of Hungary from the Reform Era to the End of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Gábor Gyáni, György Kövér, and Tibor Valuch (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 2004), 290.

<sup>17</sup> Brusatti, *100 Jahre österreichischen Fremdenverkehr*, 83–86. For more detailed examinations of the *Sommerfrische* habits among specific groups and in certain locales: Deborah R. Coen, “Liberal Reason and the Culture of the Sommerfrische,” *Austrian History Yearbook* 38 (2007): 145–59; Elisabeth Auersperg-Brunner and Wolfgang C. Berndt, *Der Attersee: Die Kultur der Sommerfrische* (Vienna: Brandstätter, 2008).

into our country only with great effort (expensive pamphlets, travel agencies, transportation discounts), the Austrian himself is won comparatively cheaply.”<sup>18</sup> Table 1 below<sup>19</sup> provides a glimpse at the yawning gulf between the volume of the Austrian and Hungarian domestic markets. In 1935 alone there were as many as sixteen times more domestic tourist registrations recorded in Austria than in Hungary. In truth, the disparity must be almost certainly far less than that. It is impossible to believe that every one out of three citizens in a semi-industrialized Austria of some 6.7 million people in the depressed 1930s could afford to be a tourist, let alone find accommodation as one. The population of Vienna numbered around 1,875,000 inhabitants at this time, but the official *Statistisches Handbuch* claims the capital as the location of origin for a staggering 1,200,853 registrations.<sup>20</sup> Either two out of every three Viennese had occasion to be registered travelers – hard to fathom during these years of economic hardship – or the bookkeeping methodology employed deserves a skeptical eye.

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<sup>18</sup> “Sorgenkind Fremdenverkehr,” *Der Fremdenverkehr*, July 1936: 2.

<sup>19</sup> Sources for Table 1: Magyar Gazdaságkutató Intézet, *A magyar idegenforgalom alakulása 1927-1937* (Budapest: Magyar Gazdaságkutató Intézet, 1938), 30, 42, 45-46; Bundesamt für Statistik, *Statistisches Handbuch für den Bundesstaat Österreich*, XVI:31–32.

<sup>20</sup> Bundesamt für Statistik, *Statistisches Handbuch für den Bundesstaat Österreich*, XVI:32.

**Table 1. Tourist registrations in Hungary and Austria, 1932-1935**

	<b>1932</b>	<b>1933</b>	<b>1934</b>	<b>1935</b>
<b>Hungary</b>				
Rest of Hungary to Budapest	96,830	90,752	91,656	87,176
Rest of Hungary to Lake Balaton	40,428	44,968	52,348	60,342
<u>Hungary Total</u>	<u>137,258</u>	<u>135,720</u>	<u>144,004</u>	<u>147,518</u>
<b>Austria</b>				
<i>Land to Land</i> (incl. Vienna as destination)	1,165,540	1,024,605	1,099,310	1,230,783
Vienna to <i>Länder</i>	1,106,873	982,671	1,054,951	1,200,853
<u>Austria Total</u>	<u>2,272,413</u>	<u>2,007,276</u>	<u>2,154,261</u>	<u>2,431,636</u>

Part of the issue here are the standards of “registration” that the Austrian and Hungarian governments followed when it came to compiling tourism statistics – a problem introduced in the previous chapter. There are wrinkles to this question, however, that seem particularly relevant when examining the specific context of domestic tourism. It is possible that the peculiar habits of family vacationing had a hand in piling on the number of registrations in Austria. By the early 1900s, it was not uncommon in bourgeois Viennese households for the ladies and dependent children to go off to their vacation spot while the male breadwinners stayed in the city for at least a portion of the summer, visiting in the evenings or on weekends in order to save money.<sup>21</sup> If the “migratory” male guest had to fill out a form each time he came round, then he could easily rack up a considerable number of registrations. The net effect, one imagines, is that the Austrian

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<sup>21</sup> Brusatti, *100 Jahre österreichischen Fremdenverkehr*, 84.

numbers appear to be “inflated” (in the sense that far fewer discrete individuals traveled than the registration figures would indicate) and the Hungarian numbers significantly under-representative.<sup>22</sup> But, while it is clearly necessary to exercise caution with figures like these, there is more than enough evidence to confirm that Austrians were “better” domestic tourists than were Hungarians.

Economic and social factors can explain much about the disparities between the Austrian and Hungarian domestic tourism industry. Yet they cannot, on their own, explain why Hungarian promoters clamped on so doggedly to the discourse of national ignorance as their own way to rationalize the trade’s shortcomings. To begin to understand this, we must examine more “subjective” factors than data can provide.

### **3.2 THE “GOLDEN AGE” OF HOMELAND STUDIES IN INTERWAR CENTRAL EUROPE**

The Hungarian tourism promoters’ worries over the perpetuation of national ignorance and its effect on their industry were obviously inseparable from their ambitions to carry on a profitable trade. These anxieties arose, however, during a period in which the middle classes of German-speaking and German-influenced east-central Europe, including Hungary, took a growing interest in researching, celebrating, and protecting the *Heimat*. The word *Heimat* has neither an elegant nor adequate translation from German. The English “homeland” stands as a serviceable

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<sup>22</sup> Corinna Peniston-Bird has intimated there were unspecified “problems” with Austrian tourism statistics in this period, and one imagines that it could easily have been in the reporting communities’ interest to inflate their apparent popularity in some way. Corinna Peniston-Bird, “Coffee, Klimt, and Climbing: Constructing an Austrian National Identity in Tourist Literature, 1918-38,” in *Histories of Tourism: Representation, Identity and Conflict*, ed. John K. Walton (Clevedon, Buffalo, and Toronto: Channel View Publications, 2005), 171.



approximation (and will be used as such here), but does not fully reveal the crucially important range of its connotations. In John Alexander Williams's apt phrasing, "*Heimat* was [and is] an extraordinarily slippery and unstable idea with an overabundance of conflicting meanings."<sup>23</sup> The word can slide ambiguously from the intimate awareness and emotional fulfillment of feeling "at home" experienced by an individual in a particular environment all the way to "homeland" as one's native or adoptive country.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, it carries an odor of the soil, strongly implying a connection between home and the literal ground that it occupies.

The literature on *Heimat* and its meanings is enormous, especially in literary, film, and cultural studies. Unfortunately, however, relatively few works address the topic in a specifically Austrian context. While it would be dangerous to draw too many strong conclusions from studies examining the state referred to as modern Germany – *Heimat* is a ferociously subjective and context-sensitive idea, after all – we can be certain that much was shared across geopolitical borders. Indeed, with the historical importance of the *Heimat* concept in pan-German and/or German racial thinking, it would be impossible to insist on finding exclusively "Austrian" or "German" schools of thought.

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<sup>23</sup> John Alexander Williams, "'The Chords of the German Soul Are Tuned to Nature': The Movement to Preserve the Natural Heimat from the Kaiserreich to the Third Reich," *Central European History* 29, no. 3 (1996): 359.

<sup>24</sup> I have drawn on this vast literature in only a limited capacity. See: Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1990); Alon Confino, "The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Heimat, National Memory and the German Empire, 1871-1918," *History and Memory* 5, no. 1 (April 1, 1993): 42–86; Jost Hermand and James Steakley, eds., *Heimat, Nation, Fatherland: The German Sense of Belonging* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996); Elizabeth Boa and Rachel Palfreyman, *Heimat, a German Dream: Regional Loyalties and National Identity in German Culture 1890-1990* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Alon Confino, "Heimat, National Memory, and the German Empire," in *Germany as a Culture of Remembrance: Promises and Limits of Writing History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 29–56; Peter Blickle, *Heimat: A Critical Theory of the German Idea of Homeland* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002). Mark Bassin, "Blood or Soil? The Völkisch Movement, the Nazis, and the Legacy of Geopolitik," in *How Green Were the Nazis? Nature, Environment, and Nation in the Third Reich*, ed. Franz-Josef Brüggemeier, Mark Cioc, and Thomas Zeller (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 204–42; Stefan Eminger, "Heimat - Region - Identität: Konzepte und Methoden der Gemeindeforschung in Niederösterreich," in *Občanské elity a obecni samospráva, 1848-1948*, ed. Lukáš Fasora, Jiří Hanuš, and Jiří Malíř (Brno: Centrum pro Studium Demokracie a Kultury, 2006), 94–107; Alexandra Ludewig, *Screening Nostalgia: 100 Years of German Heimat Film* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2011); Friederike Eigler, "Critical Approaches to Heimat and the 'Spatial Turn,'" *New German Critique* 39, no. 1 (2012): 27–48.

The national ambiguity of *Heimat* stems in large part from the historical context of its origins as an intellectual field. In the final quarter of the nineteenth century, *Heimat* became the focus of a diverse but interconnected set of intellectual and political projects. Townspeople and women banded together in civic associations to celebrate the uniqueness of their environments and shield them from the effacement of industrial capitalism. This was especially so in the recently-formed German Empire, where rapid economic growth came at the expense of startling, sometimes grievous environmental costs.<sup>25</sup> Although they were far from identical in aims, membership, and politics, these societies for beautification (*Verschönerung*), historical monument preservation (*Denkmalpflege*), or landscape conservation (*Heimatschutz*) all helped articulate *Heimat* as a space of public life.

Supporting these movements were scholars – sometimes called Heimatlers – typically working as amateurs, who endeavored to “discover” their respective Heimats by cataloging as much of their human and natural histories as possible. Their efforts gave rise to a suite of disciplines comprising not only *Heimatkunde* (the study of one’s *Heimat*), but also *Landeskunde* (the study of a particular administrative or historical region) and *Volkskunde* (folkloristics, or the study of the cultural practices and products of a certain group of people). This knowledge combined the geography, history, economics, and ethnography of a particular settlement or region for the edification of those who lived there. Eduard Spranger, an early and influential theorist of *Heimatkunde*, thus defined the field in 1923: “Scientific *Heimatkunde* is the orderly

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<sup>25</sup> A sizeable historiography on these associations exists for the Wilhelmine and Weimar eras in Germany, but not for contemporaneous Austria or Hungary. See: Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials*, *passim*; Raymond H. Dominick, *The Environmental Movement in Germany: Prophets & Pioneers, 1871-1971* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992) and William H. Rollins, “Heimat, Modernity, and Nation in the Early Heimatschutz Movement,” in *Heimat, Nation, Fatherland: The German Sense of Belonging*, ed. Jost Hermand and James Steakley (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 87–112, respectively; William H. Rollins, *A Greener Vision of Home: Cultural Politics and Environmental Reform in the German Heimatschutz Movement, 1904-1918* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997).

knowledge of the interconnectedness of people in all of their natural and spiritual life-relationships [*Lebensbeziehungen*] with a particular patch of earth, which is for them their birthplace or at least their permanent residence.” He was careful to emphasize that this “science” should consist minimally of some aspect of both the natural and human history of the “patch of earth” in question.<sup>26</sup>

Hungarian-speaking scholars, who entered the field somewhat later than their German-speaking counterparts, developed an analogous vocabulary of their own. *Honismeret* is a calque, or loan translation, of *Heimatkunde*. It has a companion term in *szülőföldismeret*. The former bends more towards the national (*hon-* being rather like the Latin *patria*, a large-scale home territory) and the latter more towards an intimate space of hearth and field (*szülő* is “parent,” *föld* is “ground”).<sup>27</sup> The “knowledge of one’s homeland” reflected in *Heimatkunde/honismeret* is managed and mediated by experts; it is a field of study and, especially in the German-speaking world, a field of pedagogy. Therefore while it presumes that everyone has first-hand, untrained, and emotional – in a word, “organic” – knowledge of their home, *Heimatkunde/honismeret* organizes and “improves” this knowledge with the intervention of geographers, historians, folklorists, geologists, naturalists, and other dedicated specialists (who were not necessarily professionals). But, while the terms signify institutionalized branches of learning, to interwar

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<sup>26</sup> Eduard Spranger, *Der Bildungswert der Heimatkunde*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1949), 8-9.

<sup>27</sup> *Hon*, an ancient stem signifying “home,” is the basis of some words important in historical constructions of Hungarian national belonging. The Honvéd (national guard) was the citizens’ army recruited against the Habsburgs in 1848-49 and the name of the reserve corps under exclusively Hungarian command (as opposed to the common military) after 1867. Accordingly, *honvédelem* is “homeland protection” and thus *honvédelmi minisztérium* is today’s “ministry of defense.” *Honfoglalás* (occupation of the homeland) refers to the period in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries when Magyar-led tribes conquered the Carpathian Basin, which nationalists in the 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries used as justification for Hungarian dominance in the region. There is another word, *haza*, which one might also translate as “Heimat,” but it is not used to describe a field of knowledge. And, as the inimitable George Szirtes recently observed, “The word *haza* has enormous significance for Hungarians. The German *Heimat* may be an equivalent but *haza* has an extra martial flavour. It is a word forged from adversity.” George Szirtes, “Hungarian Rhapsody,” *Jewish Quarterly*, August 1, 2013, <http://jewishquarterly.org/2013/08/hungarian-rhapsody/>.

activists they also meant “knowledge” in the broader sense of “consciousness,” which an individual could possess with a greater or lesser intensity. The true test of this knowledge was personal connectedness and, ultimately, loyalty to the homeland – not factual accuracy.

(To spare my reader the tedium of constantly reusing and re-explaining each of the various German or Hungarian terms on their own, I will hereafter simply refer to them all in the collective as a belonging to the single field of “homeland studies.” I acknowledge, however, that this umbrella phrase is best understood as a heuristic confection that covers ideas that are not *entirely* interchangeable.)

Everyone had their own practical knowledge of “home” formed in the context of personal experience and direct social relations. People tend not to need guidebooks, let alone historians, to tell them where to spend the night, find a good meal, or entertain themselves. Subjectively, they know where they are going, what they can do there, and how one space relates to another – all in ways that no handbook could explain meaningfully (or even interestingly) to an outsider. The interwar discourse of homeland studies, on the other hand, had the aim of bridging that individual feeling of “home” with the work of experts, whose implicitly “superior” forms of knowledge offered the key to correct regional or national self-understanding. A monument or old church at the center of town already might have plenty of significance to one who lived there, but chances were that they could not recite more than local apocrypha. “The knowledge of things past is in a curious state,” the Viennese journalist Theodor F. Meisels wrote at the beginning of his *Bummel durch Alt-Wien* (Stroll through Old Vienna), a collection of historical anecdotes about various locations in the city. “As an example, there are probably many more Viennese who

could find their way in Pompeii of 79 A.D. than those who have a clear idea of Vienna with its ramparts, which disappeared only seventy years ago.”<sup>28</sup>

Homeland scholars did not work to displace pre-existing meaning, but rather to preserve some elements and “improve” others. They rounded up the patrimony of the *Heimat*, anthologizing folk songs and folk verse, collecting works of folk art, classifying traditional styles of architecture, and taking notes on village rituals and performances. With these precious things in hand, homeland scholars with activist intentions could “remind” others – especially the provincial middle class – that they were heirs to a collective past. By and large, homeland studies comprised a pedagogical field, not an academic one. It was the scholars’ duty as educators to illuminate the full picture of post-imperial citizens’ immediate environments and extend local patriotism into love of country.

Homeland researchers in Austria and Hungary may have shared a basic goal, but they came to it with differing approaches and professional backgrounds. First of all, even before the collapse of the empire, the *Heimat* movement in its many guises had been more popular and more accomplished in Austria for longer than in Hungary.<sup>29</sup> Recognizing this disparity, Hungarian researchers perceived their work to be one of catching up. “How far behind the Germans we are... how great the task is before us,” sighed Ferenc Fodor in 1935.<sup>30</sup> Second, in

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<sup>28</sup> Theodor Friedrich Meisels, *Bummel durch Alt-Wien* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Zeitungs, 1936), 5.

<sup>29</sup> Ulrike Kammerhofer-Aggermann, “Die Anfänge der Salzburger Heimatwerks- und Heimatpflege,” in *Volkskunde und Brauchtumpflege im Nationalsozialismus in Salzburg: Referate, Diskussionen, Archivmaterial*, Salzburger Beiträge für Volkskunde 8 (Salzburg: Salzburger Landesinstitut für Volkskunde, 1996), 81–119. The Gesellschaft für Salzburger Landeskunde, to take another example from that region, celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1936 while noting that many other groups of its kind had been founded prior to 1850. Using the occasion to reflect on the history of the movement in Austria more generally, the society located its spiritual roots in the early nineteenth-century turn from Enlightenment to Romanticism. Deeper still, it traced the textual roots of the word *Landeskunde* to a 1786 work on Lower Austria and its conceptual underpinnings *avant le lettre* to a “national-economic, cameralistic” description of the Salzburg region from the reign of Maria Theresa. *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Salzburger Landeskunde* LXXVI (1936): 180–183.

<sup>30</sup> Ferenc Fodor, “A szülőföldismeret,” in *Honismeret könyve*, ed. Antal Bodor (Budapest: Magyar Társaság Falukutató Intézete, 1935), 35.

Hungary, academics – geographers most of all – were the standard-bearers of *honismeret*. In Austria, on the other hand, homeland scholars often came from the ranks of provincial school teachers or branches of the civil service, pursuing their studies as a sideline passion. Fodor saw this contrast as one of the reasons he and his colleagues lagged behind the *Heimat* scholars, who, he judged, had endeavored wisely to educate the public rather than furnish the ivory tower of professional geography. It was incumbent upon academicians, he maintained, to advance *honismeret* as a field of applied learning. It was their duty as educators to illuminate the full picture of Hungarians' immediate environments and extend local patriotism into love of country.<sup>31</sup> Third, homeland scholars in Hungary tended to write under the presumption that there existed a definite and singular Hungarian nation. *Honismeret* entailed being conscious of this entire nation and its territory, which, at base, conformed to the borders of the pre-1918 Kingdom of Hungary. It was a perspective that began with these fixed boundaries and moved inward. Regional differences in dialect and culture were worthy of study and pride, but, ultimately, knowing and maintaining the whole was the most important thing. Austrian scholars, on the other hand, operated simultaneously on two levels: one that was intensely local and one that spanned the length and breadth of the entire German *Volk*. Each locality or historical region was a *Heimat* in its own right; but it was also a unique expression of the greater *Heimat* of *Deutschtum* – the German nation writ large. Thus *Heimatkunde* moved mentally in the opposite direction of *honismeret*: outward from the personal and the profoundly specific towards the nebulous frontiers of the *Volk*.

Interwar Hungarian homeland researchers labored under the assumption that their co-nationals were, on the whole, collectively ignorant of what lay within the borders of the nation.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 26–35.

For them, the lack of *honismeret* was one of the chief maladies of the era and, retrospectively, an accessory to the injustices that had only too recently been committed against Hungary. In what we today might call a “continuing education” textbook for adults, Ferenc Fodor blamed the upheavals of 1918-1920 on a general unawareness of the homeland. With no shortage of didactic intent, Fodor’s volume laid out the geography, economy, and ethnography of the country, with a special emphasis on how the Treaty of Trianon had diminished its size and strength. These objective, structural factors were not at fault, he wrote,

but rather the nation must indict itself of not having known its homeland. The plowman only knew and loved his own little patch of land, and did not realize how necessary it was, even for his own well-being, that every piece of the country’s soil should remain the nation’s. The greater part of the industrial working class was completely detached from the Hungarian soil, and it allowed itself to plant the evil lesson in its heart that it had no homeland. The educated Hungarian middle class perhaps loved the Hungarian soil, but did not know it; thus it did not love the soil of its homeland correctly.<sup>32</sup>

It is worth noting how the passage quoted above places the burden of *honismeret* equally on urban laborers, farmers, and the intelligentsia. Indeed, despite the well-known counterrevolutionary distrust of Budapest as the “sinful city,” metropolitans were not the only ones whose ignorance had supposedly alienated them from their country. University professor of agricultural science Ferenc Steinecker, for instance, opined in 1936 that village leaders and officials assigned to the countryside knew too little about the places they served, even when they

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<sup>32</sup> Ferenc Fodor, *A szülőföld és honismeret könyve* (Budapest: Egyetemi Nyomda, 1926), 16.

had been born and raised in them.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, the provinces, not the capital, appear as the unknown quantities of the interwar period.

One cannot help but detect in this a certain ironic twist. Interwar Hungary was the Hungary of “no, no, never!”, of dramatic public monuments memorializing the territorial losses inflicted by the Treaty of Trianon, and particularly of the apotheosis of the image of pre-1918 Hungary’s borders into a ubiquitous icon of national suffering.<sup>34</sup> Even in a period renowned for irredentist propaganda, we find intellectuals, businessmen, and politicians united in the conviction that Hungarians knew almost nothing meaningful about their country’s geography. And yet, this fear that Hungary was *terra incognita* is in the final analysis not entirely surprising. It could be argued that the obsession with borders and zones of foreign occupation that characterized irredentist discourse encouraged Hungarians to think of Hungary more in terms of *space* than *place*. In other words, for as much as it insisted that the shape of the nation had been mutilated, this rhetoric did comparatively little to instruct its audience on the substance contained within the nation’s “proper” geographic limits (other than it was composed of anguished but proud Hungarians). The country was an expanse of land out of which enemies had unjustly taken slices; countless silhouettes of the old kingdom, shaded to emphasize the “missing” parts of the whole and the smallness of the remainder, appeared throughout Hungary on signs, in books, on film, and a flood of patriotic tchotchkes.<sup>35</sup> This was a kind of rhetoric that invited emptiness.

The invocation of “space” and “place” here requires clarification. Following Yi-Fu Tuan, “space” is abstract and open, permitting movement. “Space” becomes “place” when people “get

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<sup>33</sup> Ferenc Steinecker, “Előszó,” in *Honismeret könyve*, ed. Antal Bodor (Budapest: Magyar Társaság Falukutató Intézete, 1935), 3–4.

<sup>34</sup> Miklós Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision in Hungary, 1920-1945*, trans. Thomas J. DeKornfeld and Helen D. DeKornfeld (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 2007).

<sup>35</sup> Miklós Zeidler, “Irredentism in Everyday Life in Hungary during the Inter-War Period,” *Regio: Minorities, Politics, Society* 2 (2002): 71–88.



to know it better and endow it with value.”<sup>36</sup> Put another way, places are fixed points in space with varying degrees of meaning attached. Lief Jerram, in an attempt to bring order to scholars’ frequently undisciplined use of the terms, has offered a three-part explanation that distinguishes among space (“the particular proximate disposition of things in relation to one another”), location/site (where things are on the Earth’s surface and the nature of the relationships between them), and place (“the values, beliefs, codes, and practices that surround a particular location, whether that location is real or imagined”).<sup>37</sup> While by these definitions Hungary was certainly a place – because that shape was nothing if not laden with meaning – interwar proponents of *honismeret* feared that it was, for too many of its residents, not *enough* of a place. They worried that Hungarians, failing to appreciate the sacred interconnectedness of their natural and human environments, meanly and foolishly neglected to pay their land the reverence it was due.<sup>38</sup>

The outlook of Austrian homeland scholars, by contrast, greatly privileged *place* over *space*. Their objects of study – usually their village, region, historical province, or *Land* – were closer to hand. They were not motivated by a fear that those who lived in the *Heimat* were ignorant of it; rather, they endeavored to enrich what was already known about the homeland, casually as well as formally, with new research. In this respect, their mentality was much more strongly local or provincial, in the literal sense of the word. While anxious scholars of *honismeret* feared for a homeland that was monolithic but mysterious, Austrian *Heimatlers* were at their most prolific and dedicated. Historian Karl Gutkas has called the decades after the First World War

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<sup>36</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 6.

<sup>37</sup> Lief Jerram, “Space: A Useless Category for Historical Analysis?,” *History and Theory* 52 (2013): 403–404.

<sup>38</sup> Fodor, *A szülőföld és honismeret könyve*, 324–335.

“the grand age of *Heimat* research” in Austria.<sup>39</sup> Amateur scholars puzzled out where they and their *Heimat* belonged on a reshuffled continent, penning monographs and forming new journals. Any self-respecting town (from a homeland scholar’s point-of-view) produced a *Heimatbuch*, which, founded on diligent research, narrated the history of the place from its earliest days to recent times, described its natural environment, and stood, in general, as a monumental labor of love on the part of local collaborators.<sup>40</sup> Hungarian homeland scholars from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onward also wrote their own *Heimatbücher*, and while plentiful, they do not appear to have been as ubiquitous or obligatory to civic pride.<sup>41</sup>

One such publication was *Heimatgaue*, edited by the Budapest-born schoolteacher Adalbert Depiny, who would later become a high-ranking cultural functionary in the Fatherland Front.<sup>42</sup> It strove to deliver the residents of Upper Austria popularized but nonetheless “scientific” knowledge about their home province and delivered news from the region’s *Heimat* associations.<sup>43</sup> The articles covered a wide range of subjects, but all were joined in a strenuous, sometimes pedantic, effort to catalog the things that made Upper Austria special. One issue, for instance, contained an elegy to the faded hobby of listening to the region’s birds, reviewing their local names and their place in regional literature; a later contributor assailed this with a relentless

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<sup>39</sup> Karl Gutkas, “Niederösterreich,” in *Österreich 1918-1938: Geschichte der Ersten Republik*, ed. Erika Weinzierl and Kurt Skalnik, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Graz: Styria, 1983), 841–72. Other scholars, focusing on Germany, have shared Gutkas’s sentiment. Mathias Beer, “Das Heimatbuch als Schriftenklasse,” in *Das Heimatbuch: Geschichte, Methodik, Wirkung*, ed. Mathias Beer (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2010), 9–39.

<sup>40</sup> For a study of the genre, consult Mathias Beer, ed., *Das Heimatbuch: Geschichte, Methodik, Wirkung* (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2010).

<sup>41</sup> That said, an extensive bibliography of works in this vein was available by the end of the Second World War. Antal Bodor, ed., *Magyarország helyismereti könyvészete, 1527-1940* (Budapest: Magyar Társaság, 1944).

<sup>42</sup> Specifically, in 1934 Depiny assumed the role of Landesreferent for Upper Austria in the *Neues Leben* hierarchy. Walter Goehring, “Erwachsenenbildung,” in *Österreich 1918-1938: Geschichte Der Ersten Republik*, ed. Erika Weinzierl and Kurt Skalnik, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Graz: Styria, 1983), 609–30; “Land Oberösterreich - Biografie Ansicht,” accessed May 2, 2013, <https://e-gov.ooe.gv.at/biografien/Start.jsp?param=ooe&personId=143>.

<sup>43</sup> Adalbert Depiny, “Wege und Ziele,” *Heimatgaue* 1, no. 1 (1919/1920): 1–7.

etymological critique, claiming to have superior proof of the *true* avian folk-taxonomy.<sup>44</sup> Readers could edify themselves with a meticulous, nine-page study on Upper Austria's various Christmas traditions or with a history of the invention of the "Bröselmaschine," an 18<sup>th</sup>-century textile-manufacturing apparatus, that originated in the Mühlviertel region of the province.<sup>45</sup> Numerous articles took stock of folk sayings, folk art, and folk customs; countless others examined episodes from Upper Austrian history, most typically from before 1850.

In 1927, the publication of *Austria: its Land, People, and Culture* (*Österreich: sein Land und Volk und seine Kultur*) brought into the world something approaching a single, grand *Heimatsbuch* that encompassed the entire republic. Michael Haberlandt, founder of the Museum der Volkskunde in Vienna and a doyen among homeland scholars (and, like Adalbert Depiny, born in Hungary), edited the hefty volume.<sup>46</sup> The publisher's wish, according to one of the multiple forewords, was that the book would "awaken the Austrian population to renewed love and all-embracing [Umfassende] appreciation for its fatherland" and that it would "become a book for every household and family in our states and especially also in all well-read Viennese circles."<sup>47</sup> (Though the dedication from Austrian president Michael Hainisch expressed a hope that it would tempt foreigners to come visit, as well.)

A sense that Austria is something hybrid, both a unitary entity and the composite of nine smaller ones, pervades the work. Two-hundred-and-twenty-two of its 504 pages are given specifically to sections on the culture and customs of each and every *Bundesland*, as if to signal

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<sup>44</sup> The original article is Franz Prillinger, "Unsere heimatlichen Vögel in der Volkskunde," *Heimatgaue* 3, no. 1 (1922): 30–33; the rejoinder came in A. v. Avanzini, "Heimische Vogelnamen," *Heimatgaue* 4 (1923): 373–374.

<sup>45</sup> Adalbert Depiny, "Weihnachtsgebräuche," *Heimatgaue* 1, no. 2 (1919/1920): 116–125; Fritz Kreindel, "Die Mühlviertler Bröselmaschine," *Heimatgaue* 16, nos. 1–2 (1935): 78–81.

<sup>46</sup> "Haberlandt, Michael," *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1958).

<sup>47</sup> Michael Haberlandt, ed., *Österreich: sein Land und Volk und seine Kultur* (Vienna and Weimar: Verlag für Volks- und Heimatkunde, 1927), xi–xii.

that the newly-renovated edifice of Austrian identity only stands courtesy of each regional pillar. In the chapters that deal with the country in summary (e.g. geography, climate, demography, etc.) there, too, distinctions among the *Länder* are prominent. Specificities and specimens dominate, rather than overviews or images of Austria as a whole. One photographic plate from the chapter on the *Volkskunde* of Upper Austria (written by none other than Albert Depiny), for instance, was meant to depict the silhouette of a typical Upper Austrian metalwork: the ornate, masterfully lacy wrought iron sign from the guesthouse “Zum goldenen Hirschen” in Ebelsberg. This lone example, one of many in a well-illustrated book, reflects both the kind of region-centric pictures that featured heavily in Haberlandt’s volume and of the cultural artifacts that stimulated homeland scholars. On the other hand, Austrian *people* could serve the same purpose of display. One chapter surveyed the “anthropology of the Austrian population,” attempting to classify the country’s inhabitants according to physiological theories of race. Although the author explained that Austrians tended to be of the “short-skulled” (*kurzköpfig*) Dinaric race or else some blend of Dinaric and other types, he took pains to denote as far as possible the racial differences among the *Länder*.<sup>48</sup>

As a counterpoint, Ferenc Fodor’s *A szülőföld és honismeret könyve* (1926), published at roughly the same time and with similar intent – to deliver a didactic survey of the nation-state as the homeland of supreme rank – takes a noticeably more monolithic approach in presenting the image of its subject. Whereas Haberlandt’s Austria is a bundle of provinces, its borders defined by the line where each *Land* abuts the frontiers of a sovereign state, Fodor’s Hungary is a country recently re-cast from a single, solid die. The table of contents makes no mention of broad geographic regions, let alone counties, but rather lists line after line foreshadowing sections on

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<sup>48</sup> Gustav Kraitschek, “Anthropologie der österreichischen Bevölkerung,” in *Österreich: sein Land und Volk und seine Kultur*, ed. Michael Haberlandt (Vienna and Weimar: Verlag für Volks- und Heimatkunde, 1927), 197–207.

uniformly “Hungarian” subjects.<sup>49</sup> This carries on throughout the book’s first half, “Our Homeland,” which addresses such topics as the “soil of the Hungarian homeland,” the “climate and meteorology of the Hungarian land,” “how did our ancestors populate the Hungarian land?”, “what does the interior of the Hungarian land give to the nation?”, and so on.

This is not to say that Fodor pays no attention whatever to regional variations. Different areas of the country produce different goods; people (namely peasants) in certain sections of the country live in distinct styles of houses and wear different kinds of folk dress (especially if they are *not* Hungarian); the landscape of the Great Plain is different from other areas; and so forth. Furthermore, while in Haberlandt folk habits and aesthetics are the property of provinces, in Fodor they all are all, ultimately, property of a single Hungarian land that belongs to one Hungarian nation. And, where Haberlandt’s book features maps – and particularly maps of Austria as a whole – only rarely, Fodor, ever the eminent geographer, bristles with them. Many of these maps serve an unmistakably irredentist agenda, in that they labor to show the outline of Hungary as it was before Trianon. It might be said, then, that one of the few divisions of the homeland really recognized in Fodor’s volume is the one between Greater Hungary and Rump Hungary. Another division, this time implicit, is between the urban and the rural. Section II, “Our Community” (*a mi községünk*), constructs what is essentially a short but detailed *Heimatsbuch* for the imaginary village of Nagyörvég, situated on the edge of the Great Plains and intended to stand as Everytown, Hungary. On one hand, this maneuver creates an impression that one Hungarian village is much like another; on the other, by excluding cities (and especially Budapest) from “our community,” it suggests that Hungary is first and foremost a nation of villages.

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<sup>49</sup> Haberlandt, *Österreich: sein Land und Volk und seine Kultur*, viii–x.

The fact that Haberlandt's book was published by a press with offices both in Vienna and in Weimar, the capital cities of the two German-speaking republics created in 1918-1919, reminds us of a crucial point that further separated the Austrian and Hungarian discourses of homeland in the interwar years. Although the definition of *Heimat* was independent of, but still often connected with, the definition of "Austria," it was virtually inseparable from the definition of "Germany." As proud and robust as the provincial frame was in interwar homeland studies, one almost always found it hanging in the much larger gallery of universal German *Kultur*. There was an obvious and profound – and equally complicated – symbiosis between the *Heimat* idea and the expansive vision of German nationhood that undergirded it. From the perspective of building a specifically Austrian identity after the dissolution of the Dual Monarchy, the relationship to Germanness and the state called Germany never ceased to be problematic until well after the Second World War.<sup>50</sup> In a Europe in which the concept of the homogenous nation-state had ascended to normative status, this was a real dilemma – one which contemporaries felt compelled to acknowledge. A Viennese radio broadcast from early 1932 held that

Austria is the name, a formerly world-historically significant name for a region which today stretches from Marchfeld to Lake Constance [Bodensee]. Today! But this very same name once [belonged to] a much larger empire. Thus an adult Austrian has the special fate of belonging to two spiritual regions at the same time: the one is the new, purely German Austria, and the other is a bygone reality, within which the greater number of the Republic's inhabitants still live. Indeed, it is from this fact that all of today's Austrians [*Österreichertum dieser Tage*] collectively draw that inner tension, that

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<sup>50</sup> Peter Thaler, *The Ambivalence of Identity: The Austrian Experience of Nation-Building in a Modern Society* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2001).

two-sidedness, which, at a primordial depth, exists within them and their destiny like a wellspring. One can rightfully call the spirit of these people unsettled, living in a turbulence that people of this kind seek to face with cheerfulness and sunniness. So now, too, is the Austrian landscape, whenever anybody steps into it.<sup>51</sup>

Hungarian meanings of “homeland” were free of this troubling dualism. Whereas the prewar centers of *honismeret* research were concentrated within the borders of Transleithania, currents in *Heimat-* or *Landeskunde*, since the time of the Habsburg monarchy, were tributaries of the broader flow of pan-Germanic *Volkskunde* that ran through central Europe. The study of an Austrian town or province was part of a grander transnational project to define Germanness (with proportionally sharper political implications) in a way that writing about a Hungarian locale was not – not even, arguably, after the Treaty of Trianon created a new and sizeable Hungarian diaspora of sorts. In Austria, on the other hand, C.M. Peniston-Bird has observed that a “Greater German approach” to *Heimatkunde* “dominated” school curricula well into the 1930s.<sup>52</sup> Before 1934, reports Carla Esden-Tempska, “public education... did nothing to promote a sense of Austrian nationhood. If teachers promoted nationalism at all, it was German rather than Austrian nationalism. The curriculum made no distinction between Austrian and German culture, and the Ministry of Education used the term ‘German’ rather than ‘Austrian’ whenever possible.”<sup>53</sup> The Dollfuss regime’s imperative to distance the idea of “Austria” from “Germany” changed this policy, however. The curriculum promulgated in 1935 introduced *Vaterlandskunde* as a new course, blending specifically Austrian civics, history, and geography. Here, students

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<sup>51</sup> “Reichssendung: Simfonie aus Österreich,” *Radio-Wien* 8, no. 17 (January 22, 1932): 1.

<sup>52</sup> Peniston-Bird, “The Debate on Austrian National Identity in the First Republic (1918-1938),” 365.

<sup>53</sup> Carla Esden-Tempska, “Civic Education in Authoritarian Austria, 1934-38,” *History of Education Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (1990): 200.

were taught that post-1918 Austria was in fact “the heir of the empire's mission in the East,” namely the defense of (Catholic) Christianity and “western civilization.”<sup>54</sup>

The scope and nature of pro-Germany sentiments among the Austrian population before 1938 has been a matter of historical and political debate since at least the interwar period. These debates have had dramatic political outcomes – from the legitimization of Anschluss to rejection of a Nazi past in post-1945 discourses on Austrian identity – that this study will not attempt to investigate. There is little doubt, however, that many (probably most) politicians, state officials, homeland scholars, and others identified interwar Austria as a German country and Austrians as part of the German *Volk*, even if the precise terms of membership remained fluid and politically contentious.

Describing this worldview as “pan-German” (*All-* or *Gesamtdeutsch*) can be hazardous because of the frequent connection of this term with Georg Ritter von Schönerer’s aggressively antisemitic (and anti-Catholic) German nationalist movement, but it is not without merit. For in the house of pan-Germanism were many mansions. The idea that all Germans shared in a basic cultural sameness had been widely held in Austria since the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, outside of a specific association with German nationalism and before National Socialism jumped all other claims to it. As Julie Thorpe has found, it could represent different things to different people: “a constitutional freedom, an economic union, a secular or religious enlightenment, a workers' revolution, a cultural mission, a racial program or a rural landscape.” Pan-Germanism was a popular enough concept, she argues, that the leaders of “Austrofascism” did not hesitate to draw on it to legitimate their brand of anti-Nazi authoritarianism.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>55</sup> Julie Thorpe, *Pan-Germanism and the Austrofascist State, 1933-38* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2011), 37–38. On this point, Thorpe cites and agrees with Michael P. Steinberg, who earlier argued



The homeland studies scholars of interwar Austria proceeded, then, from the premise that their *Heimat* had a German past, a German present, and a German future – none of which necessarily required being situated in a state called Germany. “Our *Heimat* is German,” proclaimed the newsletter of the umbrella organization for the associations of folk-dress enthusiasts (*Trachtenvereine*) in the Salzkammergut, “and German is the language of our *Volk*; the language of [these] pages should be good German, strong and clear. We wish also, however, to give the prestige to the down-home tongues [*der bodenständigen Sprache*], to the local idioms, that they have earned as ancient traditions.”<sup>56</sup> This illustrates the subtle but crucial distinction between the *Volk* and the folks at home. Even so, it does not seem to have mattered very much in March 1938, nor significantly alloyed the “euphoria with which most Austrians greeted the loss of their country’s independence.”<sup>57</sup> If anything, widespread feelings of common Germanness only made annexation more certain as a fait accompli.

Finally, it must be said that where *Heimat* – and *szülőföld* – embraced with one arm, it excluded with the other. At the heart of these interwar discourses of homeland was an understanding that certain kinds of people were not cast from the German-Austrian (or Hungarian) mold and therefore could never belong to the *Heimat* the way its true sons and daughters did. Jews were the most vulnerable to being shut out, especially in the countryside, where they were not as numerous or influential as in urban areas. Steven Beller has observed an opposition between “high modern... [and] mass popular culture” on one hand and the *bodenständig* (belonging to the land) “culture of the *Heimat*.” Although Jews were extremely

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for a similar conclusion, albeit from the narrower vantage point of the intellectual history of the Salzburg Festival. See Michael P. Steinberg, *The Meaning of the Salzburg Festival: Austria as Theater and Ideology, 1890-1938* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), chapters 3 and 4.

<sup>56</sup> F[rantz] H[uber], “Berghoamat,” *Berghoamat* 1, no. 1 (January 15, 1927): 1.

<sup>57</sup> Evan Burr Bukey, *Hitler’s Austria: Popular Sentiment in the Nazi Era, 1938-1945* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 33.

important producers of the former, “[they] were still not recognized by other Austrians” as part of the latter. Beller posits a “tragic conflation between the way Austrians understood their national identity and their attitudes to the political and ideological splits in the country.” He argues further that

To the extent that there was an Austrian national identity in the interwar period, it was dominated by the Christian Socials’ conservative and Catholic definition. Beyond the Austrian popular culture of the operetta there was another more engrained, traditional popular culture, the actual culture of the *Heimat*. This was a world where beauty was defined by girls in dirndls set against a backdrop of Alpine scenery, a world in which Jews were seen as foreign and hence as intruders.<sup>58</sup>

Beller’s point about the antisemitic undercurrent of the “traditional popular culture” of the *Heimat* (reinforced by the more élite culture of homeland studies) is an important one, and, as we have seen, attempts to define Austrian national identity always had to contend with the robust identities of the provinces. However, it is precisely because of these regional identities that Beller’s presentation of *Heimat* as a single, countrywide *mise en scène* of milkmaids and mountains cannot account for each’s *Land*’s real cultural and political autonomy. Dedicated to the idea of *Heimat* probably more than most, homeland researchers in both Austria and Hungary were equally committed to displaying every little flourish that proved *their* personal *Heimat* was, in the end, not quite like any other. If the many rural homelands shared an aversion to the various imagined evils of the cities (Jews, non-Germans/non-Hungarians, cosmopolitanism,

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<sup>58</sup> Steven Beller, *A Concise History of Austria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 217.

industrialization, socialists, blasphemy, etc.), that does not mean they were simply minor articulations of a uniformly bucolic mass. By the same token, the close association of *Heimat* with the rural perpetuated a contention that *Heimat* as such belongs to the countryside – that is, there is no *Heimat* in the city. But even the great Viennese metropolis had its homeland researchers and its own flavor of *Heimat* scholarship in the form of “Alt-Wien” (Old Vienna) or “Vienna Anno” (Vienna in the Old Days) nostalgia.

### 3.3 THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN TOURISM AND HOMELAND STUDIES

In Austria and Hungary alike, homeland scholars and others involved in homeland movements played direct and often important roles in the cultivation and advertisement of domestic travel. Most readily apprehended, perhaps, is their contributions to the production of tourism literature, especially as the authors of guidebooks or as the authorities cited by other authors, such as those who worked for all-encompassing firms like Baedeker or Grieben. Homeland scholars were the stewards of local history, after all, and were better situated than anyone to provide information in deep, sometimes obsessive detail on the historical topography of their beloved towns.

Some publications aspired to serve both “strangers” and locals at the same time. One such text was *Bad Ischl: Past and Present of the Ancient Salt Market and Today’s World Spa, Bad Ischl (Bad Ischl: Vergangenheit des uralten Salzmarktes und heutigen Weltkurortes Bad Ischl)*, published in 1934 and edited by schoolteacher Albert Binna.<sup>59</sup> Written by some of the

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<sup>59</sup> Albert Binna, ed., *Bad Ischl: Vergangenheit des uralten Salzmarktes und heutigen Weltkurortes Bad Ischl* (Gmunden and Bad Ischl: Jos. Mader, 1934).

most active Heimatlers of Upper Austria, the book had no clearly defined readership. Its chapters ran the gamut of folklore, ethnography, local history, spa advertising, and attraction guide, all illustrated by plentiful photographs and a fold-out map. Clearly, here was a book that sought to “explain” Bad Ischl to anyone from near or far, provided they could read German. For one contemporary reader, such ambidextrousness was a mark of success. A review published by a Gmunden newspaper (but with a Viennese byline) had only favorable things to say of the volume. Tourists, on one hand, received a guide “that far excelled its peers,” while the “population rooted in the local soil” got a work of history that “refines love for *Heimat*, urged upon our hearts by the sight of scenic glory.”<sup>60</sup> Other examples of homeland studies/tourism promotion “crossovers” seemed to have been directed specifically at outsiders. For instance, the glossy color covers of *Ober-Österreich* promised “Landscape, Volk, Culture, and Sport”; and indeed, its contents blended ethnography and advertisement, showing off the folk art, dress, and customs of Upper Austria alongside descriptions of resorts and year-round opportunities for outdoor recreation. Its contributors included accomplished *Heimatlers* like Hans Commenda, a Linz schoolteacher whose articles appeared regularly in *Heimatgaue* and who had a handful of homeland-studies monographs (mainly pertaining to folk-dance and regional music) to his name by the mid-Thirties.<sup>61</sup>

Homeland scholars’ pursuits in the realm of material culture also lent themselves to other purposes. Regional history museums as well as gatherings organized by homeland studies associations easily became part of local tourist economies, especially in small resorts where there were generally few entertainments on offer. A promotional pamphlet from 1924 indicated that

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<sup>60</sup> E. Sch., “Ein Ischl-Buch von Albert Binna,” *Neueste Post*, March 21, 1934: 5–6.

<sup>61</sup> Hans Commenda, “Lied, Musik und Tanz im Volke,” *Ober-Österreich* 1, no. 2 (1934): 25–30. For biographical information on Commenda, see: “Commenda, Hans,” *Austria-Forum*, accessed January 21, 2015, [http://austria-forum.org/af/AEIOU/Commenda,\\_Hans](http://austria-forum.org/af/AEIOU/Commenda,_Hans).

Bad Ischl's town museum stood at a tourist's disposal as a convenient refuge from bad weather and boredom, vowing gamely that "fifteen little minutes or even a half-hour" would not be "a waste of time."<sup>62</sup> (Judging by American journalist and travel writer Clara E. Laughlin's impressed reportage on the Peasant Art Museum in Innsbruck, it may well be the case that even strangers from distant lands indeed concurred with this promise.<sup>63</sup>) An examination of *Trachtenfeste*, or mass celebrations of folk-costume, in Salzburg between 1900 and 1950 reveals that they attracted tourists from the start, even if stimulating tourism was not their explicit intention.<sup>64</sup>

In Hungary, the tight connections between tourism and homeland studies were embodied in the dynamic Gusztáv Thirring. Born in Sopron in 1861 to a German-speaking family and educated at German-language schools as a boy, he was in his later youth so disconnected from Hungarian that for a time, allegedly, he forgot how to speak what he had picked up as a small child. His academic training as a geographer yielded without delay the foundations of an astoundingly prolific career, as after 1893 he contributed upwards of a thousand pages (or more than 7,000 articles) for the two Hungarian "grand encyclopedias," the *Pallas* and the *Révai*, on the subject. In 1888 Thirring took a post at the central statistics office in Budapest, where he held the reins as director from 1904 until 1926. He was, in short, one of the classic bourgeois polymaths that the Habsburg world seemed so adept at creating. His passion, however, was

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<sup>62</sup> *Vom Museum in Bad Ischl* (Gmunden: Salzkammergut-Druckerei, 1924), 1 and 7. It is impossible to guess just how interested tourists were in *Heimatismuseen*, designed mainly for the edification of locals, but the official tourism gazette of the Ministry for Commerce and Transportation thought enough of the possibility to frame them as worth visiting. "Österreichs Heimatismuseen," *Österreichische Reise- und Verkehrsnachrichten* 8, no. 52 (November 13, 1937): 3.

<sup>63</sup> Clara E. Laughlin, *So You're Going to Germany and Austria!* (London: Methuen & Co., 1930), 375. Laughlin also gave positive reviews of the Museum für Volkskunde in Vienna (p. 423).

<sup>64</sup> Ulrike Kammerhofer-Aggermann, "Die Anfänge der Salzburger Heimatwerks- und Heimatpflege," in *Volkskunde und Brauchtumpflege im Nationalsozialismus in Salzburg: Referate, Diskussionen, Archivmaterial*, Salzburger Beiträge für Volkskunde 8 (Salzburg: Salzburger Landesinstitut für Volkskunde, 1996), 84.

homeland studies, especially of his native Sopron. Travel and outdoor leisure were central to his activities in this field, to the extent that his biographer and colleague Károly Heimler deemed him a “pathbreaking worker of Hungarian tourism” after his death in 1941. In addition to being a local historian and energetic member of the Sopron Városszépítő Egyesület (Sopron City-Beautification Association), Thirring was a founding figure of the Magyar Turista Egyesület (Hungarian Hikers’ Association) in 1888 and was the first editor-in-chief of its journal, *Turista Lapja*.<sup>65</sup> Between 1909 and 1916, he orchestrated an ambitious research project that he hoped would result in a series of “Magyar Baedekers,” the first comprehensive set of tourist guidebooks on Hungary written and published in Hungarian, as an alternative to the volumes made abroad for the benefit of outsiders.<sup>66</sup> Although the First World War stymied his grand plans, Thirring and his collaborators succeeded in producing a number of tourist guidebooks during the interwar years.<sup>67</sup>

Homeland scholars proved to be keen proponents of hiking and hill-climbing excursions – activities that, though entailing only limited amounts of travel, easily and immediately joined recreation with study of the *Heimat*. In 1924, Austria’s federal schoolbook press began publishing inexpensive guidebooks under the series title *Heimatkundliche Wanderungen*. Compact, clear, and plentifully illustrated, each pamphlet channeled expert knowledge on notable Austrian landmarks both great and small. They were designed to serve as aides (or possibly inspiration) for tourists wishing to explore interesting corners of their German Austrian

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<sup>65</sup> Károly Heimler, *Thirring Gusztáv és munkássága*, A “Soproni Szemle” kiadványai 111 (Sopron: Röttig-Romwalter Nyomda, 1941); Ágnes Kenyeres, ed., “Thirring Gusztáv,” *Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon, 1000-1990*, n.d., <http://mek.oszk.hu/00300/00355/html/>.

<sup>66</sup> Letter to the “Tekintetes Tanács,” December 1914, OSZK Kéziirattár Fond 180, Folder 15 (Thirring Gusztáv Magyar Baedeker anyaggyűjtése).

<sup>67</sup> E.g.: Gustavus [Gusztáv] Thirring, *Guide to Budapest: Official Guide of the Hungarian Association of Foreign Traffic*, 3rd ed. (Budapest: Turistaság és Alpinizmus, 1932); Gusztáv Thirring and Károly Heimler, *Sopron és környékének részletes kalauza*, 4th ed. (Budapest: Turistaság és Alpinizmus, 1935).

*Heimat*, ranging from individual churches or castles to entire landscape areas, such as Lake Neusiedl or the Waldviertel. “These handsome booklets,” magniloquently proclaimed the publisher,

are meant to vivify... the landscape for the hiker by enhancing [durch Hebung] delight in the thousandfold forms of nature in its geological and geographical structure and in its flora and fauna; but above all in the joy in the fruits of the historical and cultural-historical life of our landscapes of past and present. At the same time, however, they are intended to introduce [the tourist] to an understanding of the artworks on Austrian soil and thereby guide [him or her] to an enjoyment of their eternal beauty.<sup>68</sup>

An ambitious traveler could draw on a prolific library of no fewer than 90 guides by the early 1930s. The pamphlets’ price stamps, enumerated in both Schillings and Reichsmarks, reflects a potentially international (Germanophone) audience. On the other hand, most of the guides corresponded to locations within 150 km of Vienna, which hints that most travelers were expected to have been operating out of the capital in one way or another.

It is difficult to determine the true popularity of such guidebooks and the excursions they tried to encourage. But the strong tradition of hiking and day-tripping in German-speaking lands suggests that it would not be unreasonable to suppose that they were a regular part of leisure culture in interwar Austria.<sup>69</sup> If we survey the activities of the Gesellschaft für Salzburger

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<sup>68</sup> Herbert Preyer, *Klosterneuberg*, Heimatkundliche Wanderungen 96 (Vienna: Österreichische Bundesverlag für Unterricht, Wissenschaft und Kunst, 1931), 16.

<sup>69</sup> Hiking was one of the most class-inclusive leisure activities of the time. Indeed, Helmut Gruber estimates that it was “the single most preferred form of noncommercial recreation among Viennese workers.” Helmut Gruber, *Red Vienna: Experiment in Working-Class Culture, 1919-1934* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991),

Landeskunde, a homeland organization catering to the intelligentsia and upper classes of Salzburg (both city and *Bundesland*), we find that the society typically sponsored three to four hiking trips each year between 1919 and 1938. Their outings, led by affiliated homeland scholars, visited various locations of natural and historical interest in the area around Salzburg city, finding educational value in even the most obscure hamlet. Considering the organization's limited membership, the average attendance of around 30 or 40 participants seems to demonstrate consistent enthusiasm for these activities.<sup>70</sup>

Similar trends were afoot in Hungary, too. Many of the champions of *honismeret* were academic geographers such as Ferenc Fodor and Jenő Chonolky who held that the adaptation of their field to primary and secondary school classrooms would lay the surest foundations for knowledge of the homeland on a large scale. They also, however, regarded tourists as the ideal frontline agents for generating and spreading that knowledge. Chonolky maintained that tourists – specifically *turisták*: hikers and alpinists, in the parlance of the time – had an obligation to collect ecological and ethnographic data on their wanderings.<sup>71</sup> Alpinist and writer Aladár Hensch concurred, eloquently praising tourism as “one of the most important, most expedient tools for focusing and cultivating love of the homeland.” It was the tourist's personal encounters with the landscape and sites of national importance that inevitably left him with an abiding affection for Hungary. “The ardor of theoretical knowledge,” he wrote, “is dwarfed by those feelings which stir in us if a historical monument, the tumbledown remains of a castle unfolds in

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121. And here is this colorful, revealing bit of advice for American tourists from J. Alexander Mahan: “If a Viennese Professor invites you to make an Ausflug with himself and his family, accept with caution. You may be letting yourself in for a journey on foot through the whole Wienerwald and for miles along the Danube. About the time you are praying for a taxi, he is apt to suggest climbing Kahlenberg. He is splendid company but a marvel of endurance.” J. Alexander Mahan, *Vienna of Yesterday and Today* (Vienna: The Vienna Times, 1928), 255.

<sup>70</sup> These figures are compiled from the annual *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Salzburger Landeskunde* from 1919 through 1938.

<sup>71</sup> Jenő Chonolky, “Mit és hogyan kell a turistának gyűjteni?,” in *Honismeret könyve*, ed. Antal Bodor (Budapest: Magyar Társaság Falukutató Intézete, 1935), 45–52.



its great verity before our eyes, or if we visit the site of a battle, the stage upon which the reminiscence of an old glory appears amidst nature... Let us train tourists – and with them, we have trained patriots!”<sup>72</sup>

In the spirit of this appeal, the municipal government of Budapest invested resources to mobilize adult day-trippers. Through its Extracurricular Popular Education Committee (Iskolánkívüli Népművelési Bizottság), the city began sponsoring an array of short touristic excursions inside and outside the metropolitan area at least as early as the first years of the 1930s. “The academic field trips have proven themselves to be one of the most rewarding forms of civic popular education,” boasted the 1934 statistical yearbook. “It is all the more encouraging because they are particularly suitable for the deepening of national cultivation and the expansion of national self-awareness through local patriotism as an expression of knowledge of the homeland.”<sup>73</sup> These excursions took thousands of participants (12,300 in 1930-1931; 23,358 in 1932-1933) to sites that the organizers considered to be of historical, cultural, or geographical interest, and which served the dual purpose of advancing local and national patriotism.<sup>74</sup>

In helping to stimulate tourism in their hometowns and provinces, however, homeland scholars encountered a certain tension between preserving the *Heimat* on one hand and promoting potentially destructive commercial forces on the other. The ethos of homeland studies was at base a conservative one, both in the sense that its practitioners wished to conserve the historical traditions of their particular region from the impositions of “modernization” and in the sense that those practitioners were often sympathetic towards, and active in, conservative political parties and movements (e.g. the Christian Social Party in Austria and the Hungarian

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<sup>72</sup> Quoted in Antal Bodor, ed., *Honismeret könyve* (Budapest: Magyar Társaság Falukutató Intézete, 1935), 78.

<sup>73</sup> Lajos I. Illyefálvi, ed., *Budapest Székesfőváros Statisztikai és közigazsági évkönyve XXII* (1934), 538.

<sup>74</sup> Lajos I. Illyefálvi, ed., *Budapest Székesfőváros Statisztikai és közigazsági évkönyve XXIII* (1935), 453-54.

“national unity” parties). But the expansion of tourism carried with it the encroachment of new elements – people, infrastructure, economic practices – that might possibly upset the seemingly stable world of the *Heimat*; things that, to the Heimatlers, could turn out to be Trojan Horses.

This was a complicated question, to be sure. The historian Steven Beller has suggested that “encouraging tourism was itself a conservative strategy,” insofar as it was “a means of achieving economic development without the need for industrialization, avoiding the full effects of modernization such as an independent working class.” He continues that “hotels and resorts continued to run on hierarchical lines at a time when union power in factories and offices was transforming the modern workplace. Provincial Austria invited foreigners from the modern world in order to keep that world out.” But herein, Beller thinks, lay a paradox. “The resentment of ‘rich’ Viennese tourists in the provinces was partly owing to the usual envy, but it was also a result of fear of the new, modern ideas and habits they might be bringing with them. That ‘touristic’ Austria relied for its livelihood on such guests from Vienna and the foreign modern world only made matters worse.”<sup>75</sup> No doubt, “locals” directly involved in the tourist trade as innkeepers, merchants, service workers, etc. – and simply those who came into contact with visitors – had reasons to chafe at the behavior of outsiders. But homeland scholars were not necessarily inclined to let any umbrage they might have taken prevent them from welcoming the harbingers of “modernity” into the *Heimat*. The promotional magazine *Ober-Österreich*, which, as we have seen, bore robust *Heimatkunde* credentials, also stands as evidence that, at least when brought together under the banner of tourism, homeland studies and “modernity” need not oppose one another. It embraced clean, Modernist aesthetics in its design and illustration. Its columns appeared in a Roman typeface, not the blackletter (Fraktur) that reigned in Austrian

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<sup>75</sup> Beller, *A Concise History of Austria*, 217–218.

printing houses. Some of its cover layouts featured bold sportsmen set dramatically against minimal landscapes, framed by streamlined text, also in “modern” fonts. The “content” of the *Heimat* may have been traditional, but it could be wrapped in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Cultural frictions between guests and hosts were not the only concern. The alterations to the landscape that tourism promoters longed for made some homeland activists nervous. Leisure travel may not have wrought havoc on environments as spectacularly as the extractive or manufacturing processes that originally inspired the *Heimatschutz* movement. Nonetheless, it held wide the door to invasive forces. Expanding and improving transportation networks meant subjecting more of the homeland to the demands of industrialization, disturbing its traditional harmony with macadam and the rumble of automobiles. The construction of grand hotels meant trees felled and vistas broken for the benefit of cosmopolites bearing the influence of outside cultures. It is no surprise, then, that Austrian Heimatlers readily engaged with the question of whether and how tourism and homeland activism could coexist peaceably. Karl Gianonni, a civil servant, historian of Lower Austria, and historical preservationist, argued in 1929 that, while they seemed at first glance to be opposites, tourism and *Heimatschutz* really worked toward the same goal.<sup>76</sup> *Heimatschutz* protected and enhanced the beauty of one’s home, while tourism satisfied a natural desire to explore the unfamiliar by opening up the beauty and uniqueness of another’s home. Therefore, both tourism entrepreneurs and Heimatlers would profit in their own way from a mutually respectful conservation of the homeland and the promotion of what made each one special.<sup>77</sup> For example, cable cars were preferable to mountain railways because they

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<sup>76</sup> The biographical information on Gianonni comes from “Karl Gianonni,” accessed July 18, 2013, [http://agso.uni-graz.at/marienthal/biografien/gianonni\\_karl.htm](http://agso.uni-graz.at/marienthal/biografien/gianonni_karl.htm).

<sup>77</sup> Karl Gianonni, *Fremdenverkehr und Heimatschutz*, Dürerbund Oesterreichische Flugschriftenreihe 1 (München: G.D.W. Callwey, 1926). This sentiment appeared in the Austrian tourist-promotion press more generally, e.g. in a Lower Austrian journal’s promises to work with *Heimatspflege* associations in preserving the landscape and

caused less environmental damage; tourists should be welcome at folk performances, as long as it is understood that such traditions are not being rehearsed for *their* sake. Indeed, it was “thanks to tourism” that the public could see evidence of homeland preservation being “economically useful.”<sup>78</sup>

### 3.4 SEE HUNGARY FIRST (PLEASE)

So far we have seen how homeland scholars in Austria and Hungary, despite divergent perspectives on the nature of their subject, shared a common interest in bringing tourism under the yoke of *Heimatkunde* and *honismeret* and thereby directed it towards a “higher” purpose. In Hungary, tourism returned the favor. Industry promoters seized the discourse of an “unknown country” developed by Ferenc Fodor and other scholars and put it to use as a marketing tool. This they brandished as a goad, attempting to unsettle the nationalist conscience of the “traveling public” into spending its time and money on a poor, neglected homeland rather than flashier options abroad.

The alignment, indeed alliance, of tourism and nation-building was not a new one in the Hungarian context. However, the rise of *honismeret*-tinged rhetoric in the early 1930s was the product of a peculiar historical moment. First, the onset of global economic depression, which had predictably devastating effects on the tourism trade worldwide, raised the stakes on the significance of leisure travel. In good times, promoters seemed content to leave as private the

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encouraging the celebration of folk-dress: “Erster Jahresbericht des Landesverbandes für Fremdenverkehr in Niederösterreich,” *Der Fremdenverkehr*, April 1929: 4

<sup>78</sup> Karl Giannoni, “Heimatspflege und Fremdenverkehr,” in *Handbuch für den oesterreichischen Fremdenverkehr*, 1934, by Bundesministerium für Handel und Verkehr, Gewerbeförderungsdienst (Vienna: Oesterreichische Gesellschaft für Fremdenverkehr, 1934), 108–110.

question of where the Hungarian middle and upper classes chose to vacation; the depression turned it into the nation's business. Second, those same economic conditions had inspired (and/or legitimated) a deeper penetration of the state into the lives of Europeans and North Americans. Already in fascist Italy – and by 1933, Nazi Germany – tourism had become a realm of state intervention. Part of the Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro cultural scheme sought to give Italians cheap rides on the state railway. Called the *treni popolari* (people's trains), these discount junkets proved successful: from their start in August 1931, more than half a million travelers availed themselves of the discounts within two months of the program's initiation. After some time, however, ridership leveled off to around 100,000 per year.<sup>79</sup>

The Fascists' program catalyzed, almost immediately, a suite of (diluted) Hungarian imitations. In a 1931 guide/promotional pamphlet forcefully titled "Let's Travel Our Native Land!", the Hungarian State Railways (MÁV) exhorted the weekender to refresh his or her "weary body and worn-out soul" by taking a short excursion to one of 29 provincial destinations. It hoped that the little booklet would open a "path to the public's heart" and make room for the following mantra: "Let's get to know our country! Let's travel our native land!"<sup>80</sup>

The following year, MÁV took a much more decisive step towards encouraging domestic tourism when it initiated a program of "penny express" (*filléres gyors*) trains. These specially-designated runs, openly modeled after the *treni popolari*, allowed passengers to journey to select destinations at fares reduced by 50 percent or more. Supposedly like their fascist forebears, the "penny" trains were designed to encourage travelers to "get to know" their country by making

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<sup>79</sup> Victoria de Grazia, *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organization of Leisure in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 180–181.

<sup>80</sup> Ferenc Koller, ed., *Utazgassunk a hazánk földjén!* (Budapest: Magyar Királyi Államvasutak, 1931), 1.

cost a less prohibitive factor.<sup>81</sup> When the program kicked off in March 1932, it met with enthusiasm from provincial cities looking to cash in on a surge of tourists from the metropole. City boosters in Pécs and Szeged printed rough-and-ready pamphlets in anticipation of the penny express riders they hoped would flock their way. The pamphlets, which contain precise instructions and prices for set lists of activities, suggest that a trip on the *filléres gyors* was meant to be a way to “experience” a given destination in a short amount of time. This “experience” was also meant to be profitable for the locals. The Szeged guide, for instance, promised that the town’s “specialties” – among them paprika, egg barley, salami, penknives, and slippers – would be for sale in the central square on days when the penny train came through.<sup>82</sup> The businessmen of Győr, a place better known for its factories than its vacations, saw the *filléres gyors* as a way to change the town’s image. Indeed, the leftist writer and sociographer Lajos Nagy described Győr in this period as a place which had invested considerable hope in tourism as a source of fame and fortune, based mostly on its position along the main rail line between Budapest and Vienna.<sup>83</sup> It is unsurprising, then, that the chamber of commerce welcomed visitors from Budapest to their “impatient city” with a suggestively-titled *Filléres Híradó* (Penny Herald). The newsletter took pains to divert the guests’ attentions away from Győr’s recent history of rapid industrialization toward a more heroic, more countrified, and more relaxing past – ostensibly more attractive to prospective tourists.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Or so this motive was later ascribed to the trains by Aladár Bogsch, vice president of the main state tourism bureau, OMIH. Aladár Bogsch, “Mi a tieendő?”, *Vendégforgalmi Újság*, January 1938: 1.

<sup>82</sup> For Pécs and Szeged, respectively: *Pécs: tájékoztató a város nevezetességeiről a filléres gyors utasai részére összeállított programról, stb.* (Pécs: Pécs szab. kir. város idegenforgalmi irodája, 1932); *Előzetes tájékoztató a filléres-gyors utasai és más kiránduló csoportok részére* (Szeged: Szeged sz. kir. város idegenforgalmi hivatala, 1932).

<sup>83</sup> Lajos Nagy, *Három magyar város* (Budapest: Kosmos, 1933), 67–69.

<sup>84</sup> *Filléres Híradó*, June 5, 1932.

Zeal for the dawn of budget travel even spread into the young Hungarian sound movie industry. Shot in the spring of 1932 and reaching the public that December, a “film operetta” titled *Filléres gyors* (dir. Béla Gaál) coupled MÁV’s new program with a social-mobility fantasy of the kind that would later make its director famous.<sup>85</sup> Because no copies of the film are known to have survived, it is difficult to get a full sense of how *Filléres gyors* (re)presented its namesake. However, a contemporary review in the *New York Times* (the movie ran for a time at the 72<sup>nd</sup> Street Playhouse) summarized things well enough for us to know that it followed the “adventures of a pair of impecunious newly-weds” who board a Penny Express for a “near-by Summer resort.” The reviewer also praised the film’s photography, particularly the shots of Budapest, which made it so that “even spectators knowing no Hungarian can follow the story.”<sup>86</sup> While this information is still insufficient to determine the extent to which *Filléres gyors* – funded in part by the government film office (Magyar Filmiroda) – was intended to serve as direct advertisement for the state railway, there is enough here to presume that the movie had at least some promotional motivations. For now, we may only speculate how the movie compared to Raffaello Matarazzo’s *Treno popolare* (1933), which, oddly enough, arrived slightly later and gave the earlier Italian model of the *filléres gyors* its own romantic comedy treatment.

In the view of József Klaudy, who wrote a somewhat fulsome history of the same travel agency conglomerate that employed him, the penny expresses were a thundering success. He asserted that from 1932 until the last train in November 1940, approximately 1.4 million passengers (or, on average, 163,170 each year) availed themselves of these discounted fares. “These extremely cheap special trains... *were intended to arrange for the movement of the great*

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<sup>85</sup> Andor Lajta, *A tízéves magyar hangosfilm 1931-1941* (Budapest: Otthon, 1942), 29–30; Gyöngyi Balogh, “Filléres Gyors,” in *Játékfilmek 1931-1998*, ed. Balázs Varga (Buda: Magyar Filmintézet, 1999), 18. A poster for the film described it as a “sound – nay, boisterous – film operetta” in five acts. OSZK Kisnyomtatványtár 48/1931.

<sup>86</sup> H.T.S., “A Hungarian Comedy,” *New York Times*, March 27, 1933.

*masses* and in every respect they duly fulfilled their calling. [...] Within a short time, the penny trains bound for the provincial cities, fairs, the Tokaj grape harvest, open-air theater festivals, races, holiday celebrations, conferences, etc. *took on unrivaled popularity.*” He looked back with particular satisfaction on the claim that “at least 50% of the ‘penny’ passengers traveling in the fourth-class coaches came from that social stratum which hitherto would have rather stayed at home out of vanity but was unwilling to travel in third class. In this sense the penny train also indirectly served the unspoken goal of *democratizing travel* and diminished the aversion to traveling third class express nurtured by a part of the middle class.”<sup>87</sup>

However, a closer look at the practical outcomes of MÁV’s enterprise suggests that it may not have fulfilled its initial promise or warranted Klaudy’s rosy retrospective. Looking back on the program after six years of continuous operation, a writer for *Vendégforgalmi Újság* (Hospitality News) opined that the Italian *treno popolare* concept had not adapted successfully to Hungarian conditions, likening the effort to asking the northern palm tree to grow in the soil of the *puszta*. The writer, citing no particular sources, claimed that the penny trains had not yielded their intended results. Rather than lure leisure travelers eager to explore the country, the budget routes attracted poorer citizens of Budapest who years ago had migrated from the countryside but could not afford to visit their families until the advent of the *filléres gyors*. These dedicated souls braved inconvenient schedules, long lines at the ticket office, and uncomfortable travel conditions – which allegedly scared off “weaker” riders like women, children, the elderly, and the convalescent – to return to their hometowns for a couple of days. Such customers, however, proved only to disappoint the grand expectations of the restaurateurs, inn-keepers, and merchants

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<sup>87</sup> József Klaudy, *Az európai legelső nemzeti utazási iroda története: a MÁV menetjegyirodájának negyven éve* (Debrecen: Tiszántúli Könyv- és Lapkiadó, 1943), 74–75. All emphases are in the original. Klaudy worked as a notary for IBUSZ, the official tourist agency of the Hungarian State Railways.



of the provincial cities. Their services went unneeded by those who could simply count on relatives for room and board. Moreover, the window of time between arrival and departure on the designated trains was too narrow for sightseers to do much more than rush through a pre-set itinerary “at the tempo of a sped-up film,” which meant accordingly little time to spend money.<sup>88</sup>

Thus by 1938 the bloom had quite gone from the rose, because the *filléres gyors* campaign one-sidedly favored Budapest over the rest of Hungary. The mayor of an unnamed provincial town stated that each year 14 trains took his citizens to the capital while only four trains came the other direction. The tourism director of another town observed with bitter ambivalence that all good things seemed to accumulate to Budapest alone; the penny trains were no exception.<sup>89</sup> When the Hungarian State Tourism Office (Országos Magyar Idegenforgalmi Hivatal) canvassed provincial cities on what improvements they would like to see in the industry, the most frequent request was that MÁV offer a greater number of discount tickets to locations other than the capital, especially on interurban lines *within* the countryside.<sup>90</sup> What’s more, the budget railroad experience was not necessarily a treat for the metropolitans who made the journey outwards. In an article titled “The Bourgeois Goes Vacationing,” László Gesztelyi-Nagy told the woeful saga of an imaginary traveler who made the mistake of taking the *filléres* from Budapest to humble Parádk in the Mátra Hills. Fees and baggage surcharges greatly inflated the

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<sup>88</sup> “Filléres kritika...”, *Vendégforgalmi Újság*, May 1938: 8. An exposé of this kind was quite rare for the touristic press in Hungary, which tended to limit its criticisms to areas of general concern – poor infrastructure, ineffective advertising, etc. – where there was a broad consensus of complaint. It is unusual to see critique of a showcase state-run program like the *filléres gyors*. This fact alone lends a certain amount of credence to the author’s assertions. However, particular points touching on inconvenient scheduling, hurried tour itineraries, demography of the passengers, and discontented riders (one “angry old man” supposedly reacted to a leaky carriage roof with threats to sue the railway) are corroborated by at least one earlier reportage. B.K., “Utazás a filléressel...”, *Weekend* 5, no. 4-5 (1932): 5–6. Dezső Kasa, delegate from Somogy County to the December 1935 meeting of the Országos Magyar Vendégforgalom Szövetség (which published both *Weekend* [as Országos Magyar Weekend Egyesület] and *Vendégforgalmi Újság*), reported that many potential riders found the penny trains to be too “exhausting” to be worth the discounted fare. “Jegyzőkönyv,” MOL K148 914. csomó, 17. tétel, 6363-935. szám, p. 6.

<sup>89</sup> “Mit kívánnak a vidéki városok?”, *Vendégforgalmi Újság*, July 1, 1938: 7.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

real cost of his ticket; the staff at the village station was inexperienced, incompetent, or both, and wasted his time; the return train departed at 11 o'clock in the evening and had no luggage car attached, meaning that he had to send his belongings home through the post office.<sup>91</sup>

Despite its faults, the *filléres gyors* system became an important fixture of tourism in Hungary between the wars. It helped cement the concept of the weekend as an attainable and desirable block of leisure time by providing – at least on paper – a means for traveling relatively quickly and cheaply. This accomplishment, indeed, carried unintended – and possibly counterproductive – consequences for other sectors of the tourism industry. Domestic arrivals to Budapest, as measured in hotel and guesthouse registrations, suffered a gradual, but severe 52.5 percent drop between 1928 and 1935; in this period, only 1934 saw a small increase over the previous year. Whereas travel to other destinations (e.g. Lake Balaton and Austria) benefited from the continent-wide revival of tourism after 1932, registrations in Budapest did not return to pre-depression levels until at least the early 1940s. A 1938 analysis by the Hungarian Economic Research Institute attributed this in part to improvements in passenger railroad traffic and the popularity of the *filléres gyors* discounts, which together allowed provincial Hungarians to visit Budapest and return the same day, obviating any need to book a room.<sup>92</sup> This knowledge presents certain challenges to our historical understanding of the program. If we also take into consideration the high probability that many – perhaps most – penny riders used their tickets to visit friends or relations (whether in Budapest or elsewhere) and therefore went unregistered, the frustrating truth is that we cannot ever arrive at a precise estimate of just how much economic influence the *filléres gyors* had on the industry, or how that influence was distributed nationwide. In any event, the influence was real.

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<sup>91</sup> László Gesztelyi-Nagy, “A polgár nyaralni megy,” *Vendégforgalmi Újság*, September 1, 1938: 5.

<sup>92</sup> Magyar Gazdaságkutató Intézet, *A magyar idegenforgalom alakulása*, 8.

The institutionalization of the penny express system allowed *honismeret* activists to draft plans for the program's use for directly pedagogical ends. Writing in *Magyar Szemle*, premier journal of the conservative establishment, the young physical geographer Pál Zoltán Szabó spoke out against what he judged to be a "ghastly lack of *honismeret*," especially among the educated. For him, the root causes of this affliction lay in the secondary school system. It was bad enough that the flat, flavorless geography curriculum could do little to inspire pupils to a love of homeland, but the fact that their instructors were scarcely more familiar with Hungary than they were made it that much worse. The country's degraded economic and cultural conditions prevented teachers from traveling and seeing it firsthand and, consequently, they were hindered in their mission to spread the gospel of Hungarianness. "The apostles saw the Savior; the Hungarian teacher has not seen the Hungarian Homeland. The apostles' strength was that they had experienced Him, felt His warm breath, believed in His immensity. The apostles of the Hungarian Homeland have only studied it, after a fashion, from what stands at arm's length from them. They have absorbed letters, not the breath of the Hungarian Homeland."<sup>93</sup>

The (in his words) "cheap solution" that Szabó put forward was in harmony with an idealized vision of budget travel culture in the "penny express" era. He envisioned a scheme whereby newly-minted young teachers would spend their vacations from school riding the rails at discounted fares, experiencing Hungary for themselves. They would be equipped with guidebooks, as well as journals and cameras (or sketchpads) to record their travels. They "could merrily camp out in tents like old scouts" – if they were male: "lodging is the concern of the young ladies" – and, "with song lyrics, florid hearts, and hats on their heads," could set out on "grand journeys of discovery" in which Hungary would "reveal before them its secret, sainted

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<sup>93</sup> Pál Zoltán Szabó, "Honismeretünk borzalmas hiánya," *Magyar Szemle* 20, no. 1–4 (1934): 275.

treasures.” Thus Szabó envisaged tourism as the capstone of teacher training and, by extension, a foundational part of the education of generations of future students. The “warm spring rain” of travel experiences would revive the “souls left parched by letters.” “A new love of the homeland would be born, a deep one, inseparable from the Hungarian soil.”<sup>94</sup>

Szabó’s article serves as a vivid, if grandiloquent, example of how tourism intersected the discourse of *honismeret* without an ulterior profit motive steering its course. It reflects from another angle the apparently pervasive fear that Hungary was terra incognita to those who should have loved it best and the parallel insistence that travel was the surest path to discovery. What Szabó possibly did not know, however, is that at roughly the same time as his article appeared, the city of Budapest was implementing a program quite similar to the one he had outlined. Rather than dispatch teachers to be trained as evangelists of the homeland, however, this program reached out to the pupils themselves. Dubbed the School Excursion Trains of the Capital City of Budapest (Budapest Székesfőváros Iskolai Kirándulóvonatai), it was the brainchild of Dr. Gyula Bodnár, instructor of Hungarian and French at the József Eötvös Municipal Gymnasium (i.e. secondary school) located in Budapest’s District IV (now part of District V).

Before the war, Bodnár had developed and fulfilled a plan to integrate countrywide excursions into seven years of the school’s eight-year curriculum. Building on the existing practice of annual one- or two-day field trips in various subjects, he saw much more ambitious trips of seven to nine days as a way for students to gain “more intensive knowledge” of a different region of the country every year. By the time a student had completed all seven journeys, “he [would have] become thoroughly familiar with his entire homeland.” But the trips had other purposes, too. They were to “endear the youth to the idea of traveling, guide them

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 276.

toward self-sufficiency, and teach them to travel using real-life experience.” They would, moreover, give the chaperoning teachers “a thousand times more opportunities to descend into the children’s frame of mind, to study it, to become familiar with it, and to be able to influence the developing young character with their own example.”<sup>95</sup>

Bodnár’s original vision was never realized in full. The program kicked off in 1909 and carried on through the 1914 school year, but the First World War forced it to end before the seventh trip in the cycle – to Transylvania – could take place. After the war, general economic instability prevented the school from organizing regular field trips on this scale, until a series of tours abroad in the late 1920s.<sup>96</sup> Nonetheless, when the city of Budapest adopted the program as its own in 1934, Bodnár remained the mastermind and József Eötvös Gimnázium served as its base of operations. The essence of Bodnár’s prewar mission thus found a second life. What had once been one school’s innovative plan for offering its students a practicum in *honismeret* now became the basis for a way to bring national self-awareness to the youth of a metropolis.

Complete statistics on the execution of the Excursion Train program are difficult to come by, but a sense of its dimensions can be gained from municipal statistical yearbooks as well as yearbooks and histories issued by the host school. It began on an experimental basis of 2,843 participants in the spring semester of 1934, making day-trips to Eger, Pécs, and Szeged. Evidently this was a strong start, because the volume and breadth of the program only expanded during the next academic year. 9,595 students went on twenty-five journeys – not including one to Vienna – to eight discrete destinations. This trend continued, and by the end of the 1936-37 school year a total of 36,579 students had participated since the program’s inception. Although

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<sup>95</sup> Kálmán Erődi and Gyula Bodnár, eds., *Emlékkönyv a Budapest Székesfővárosi IV. Ker. Községi Eötvös József Reáliskola fennállásának hetvenötödik évfordulójára* (Budapest: Székesfővárosi Könyvtár, 1931), 72.

<sup>96</sup> Ferenc Donászy and József Kollár, *A budapesti »Eötvös József« gimnázium centenáris emlékkönyve* (Budapest: Vörös Csillag Nyomda, 1954), 22.

most travelers attended *középfokú* (secondary) and *polgári* (upper elementary) schools in the capital, students from provincial schools – and even schools in Vienna – did take part in certain excursions. Twenty-five percent of the students participating in the spring semester of 1937, for instance, were not from Budapest.<sup>97</sup>

It is unclear just how much and what kind of support the Excursion Trains received from the municipal authorities, but it seems to have been quite a respectable amount. The program's organizers made an effort to ensure that even students from backgrounds of lesser means could have the experience of *honismeret* tourism. Participants only had to contribute the cost of their railway fare and were exempt from any fees for lodging and dining, as long as they brought provisions with them.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, they were provided with impressive travel guides published by the city government's official press to ensure that they could "read" the passing landscape from the train, appreciate their destinations on arrival, and know how to behave themselves as travelers. The guides were richly illustrated inside and out with full-color covers painted by volunteer contributors (usually teachers), photographs donated by local helpers, and high-quality maps, most of which were drawn by Bodnár himself.

A summary glance at the guidebook series allows for some sense of the Excursion Train program's ambitions and longevity. Some of the books made it into third and fourth editions by 1942 (Eger and Vác-Visegrád, respectively), and the last new books in the series appeared in 1941 (for destinations in recently re-annexed northern Transylvania). Bodnár worked as series editor and principal writer until his retirement in 1939, at which point two of his *gimnázium* colleagues took over: József Dombi, a history and geography teacher, and László Farkas, who

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<sup>97</sup> Kálmán Erődi, *A budapesti IV. kerületi községi Eötvös József-Gimnázium nyolcvankettedik értésítője az 1936–1937. iskolai évről* (Budapest, 1937), 30–31.

<sup>98</sup> Donászy and Kollár, *A budapesti »Eötvös József« gimnázium centenáris emlékkönyve*, 29.

also taught history and geography (as well as being the author of many didactic textbooks on these subjects).<sup>99</sup> The guides paid considerable attention to the historical and art-historical interest of each location, but also to their contemporary demographic composition, economic significance, and natural environment.

Overall, the Excursion Train guides' preoccupation with sites and structures of (national) historical significance and relatively indifferent attitude towards the present-day place them within a pedigree of genre conventions established by Baedeker (and others) in the mid-nineteenth century. Guides in this tradition, according to Rudy Koshar, ostensibly cataloged the canon of "great monuments or artworks" that comprised the "national heritage."<sup>100</sup> They supposed that the traveler, a liberal bourgeois (male) subject of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, had a "quasi-mystical relationship" with these sights and would plan meticulously-budgeted trips to "collect" experiences with them.<sup>101</sup>

Of course, Excursion Train students did not perfectly fit the mold of the typical bourgeois tourist. They were, at most, liberal bourgeois subjects in training. They could not move as they pleased; their direction was already decided and their activities closely monitored. It is therefore misleading to read the guides as one would a Baedeker, because they were not intended to be exhaustive sources of knowledge for use in planning a trip from beginning to end. They included absolutely nothing on the subject of how to acquire tickets, find accommodations and restaurants, or seek information on local services. They were pedagogical tools for telling a captive readership of travelers what they should look at, when they should expect to see it, and what meaning they were to take from it. They were itineraries, carefully and completely planned,

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<sup>99</sup> Kálmán Erődi, ed., *Budapest Székesfőváros IV. Kerületi Községi Eötvös József Gimnáziumának évkönyve az 1940–1941. iskolai évről: Az iskola fennállásának 86. évében* (Budapest, 1941), 31–34.

<sup>100</sup> Rudy Koshar, *German Travel Cultures* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2000), 49–50.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

not catalogs from which an itinerary could be assembled from scratch (albeit with much mediation, indeed coaching) in the way that Baedekers were. Students were led on their journeys by a predetermined, present-tense narration of their movements through space, in which each plot point of the “story” represented their encounter with site of national significance. Yi-Fu Tuan has argued that “place is whatever stable object captures our attention” when we are in motion.<sup>102</sup> By this measure, then, the Excursion Train guides created Hungarian national *place(s)* out of Hungarian national *space* by turning the latter into a travelogue: each step of the narrative was a “stable object” – a place – located within the ostensibly “unknown” territory of the nation. *Honismeret* was to come to the student from his/her role as the protagonist who faced these “stable objects” firsthand.

Even though the *filléres gyors* program and the projects it spawned stimulated domestic tourism, their results did not satisfy everyone in the industry. Promoters complained as late as 1942 that Hungarians still valued other countries over their own – even as hundreds of thousands of them were fighting in the Don River basin as soldiers of the Axis. Lecturing on the “tourist problems” of the Felvidék (formerly part of Czechoslovakia and returned to Hungarian control in 1938) one professor sniffed,

What is the cause of this? Nothing other than the lack of cultivation and propaganda. The greater public doesn't think. The greater public has little in the way of independent opinion. [...] The Hungarian public has not been made accustomed to an appreciation of the Hungarian landscape. The Hungarian public is bombarded with descriptions of the

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<sup>102</sup> Tuan, *Space and Place*, 161.



beauty of foreign landscapes. Nothing else can be heard besides “how gorgeous Naples is!”<sup>103</sup>

### 3.5 AUSTRIA’S MANY HOMELANDS, *POST RESTANTE*

There are very few signs that Austrian tourism promoters suffered from the level of anxiety over domestic tourism the way their Hungarian counterparts did. Corinna Peniston-Bird has pointed out some evidence of “vacation-at-home” mercantilism in Austria in the mid-1920s, when the pan-Germanist magazine *Österreich-Deutsche Fremdenverkehrs- und Reisezeitung* grated at the prodigality of 350 billion crowns having slipped into the hands of perfidious French.<sup>104</sup> There is rhetoric of economic treachery here – but not, in contrast to the Hungarian situation, of concern that Austrians don’t know their own homeland.

Another rare example of Austrian tourists as targets of moral finger-wagging comes from the tough days of Germany’s Thousand-Mark Blockade. Looking back on a shockingly dismal 1933 season, the Linz daily *Tages-Post* asked in an exasperated tone whether the country had to expect the same result for 1934. Virtually every state in Europe pursued a policy of “autarky” in tourism by discouraging their citizens from taking business elsewhere. And yet Austrians “were in the majority” of guests at Italian and Yugoslav resorts while their own land’s hotels suffered.

Is this embarrassing display to repeat itself this year? Should well-managed and inexpensive Austrian guesthouses once again remain empty while Austrians travel abroad

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<sup>103</sup> Rezső Milliker, “A Felvidék idegenforgalmi problémái,” in *Idegenforgalom és kultúra: két előadás*, Rezső Milliker and Gábor Veress (Budapest: A Magyar Kulturális Egyesületek Országos Szövetsége, 1942), 11.

<sup>104</sup> Peniston-Bird, “The Debate on Austrian National Identity in the First Republic (1918-1938),” 402.

with dearly-bought foreign currencies? No, that cannot be allowed! We are always fundamentally opposed to a restriction on the freedom of movement [Freizügigkeit], from whatever direction it may come; in times of need, however, such qualms must fall. Austrians must stay in the country! Here they must show a genuinely patriotic attitude.”<sup>105</sup>

Later that same year, the Austrian government released a memorandum to civil servants in which it reminded them that the “imperative” to vacation in their own country should appear to them as a matter of course.<sup>106</sup> But here, too, the accusations of ignorance and blindness to the qualities of the homeland that were so common in the columns of Hungarian publications are absent from this critique. Foreign, not domestic, tourists remained the targets of priority, particularly once the flow of *Reichsdeutsche* resumed in 1936. As one tourism trade journal summed it up, “While foreigners can be brought into our country only with great effort (expensive brochures, tourism offices, travel discounts), Austrians themselves can be won relatively cheaply.”<sup>107</sup>

This did not mean, however, that the state did not eventually take an interest in encouraging Austrians to travel. In 1936, the Schuschnigg government rolled out its own state-sponsored leisure program called Vaterländisches Front-Werk “Neues Leben,” or simply Neues Leben (New Life). True to the regime’s official alignment with Italian Fascism over Nazism as its ideological model, the stated inspiration for Neues Leben was the Opera Nazionale

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<sup>105</sup> “Urlaub im Lande – der beste Urlaub,” *Tages-Post*, March 14, 1934 in OÖLA Sammlung Alfred Sighartner, Hs. 5.

<sup>106</sup> “Verbringt den Urlaub in der Heimat! Der Regierung an die Beamten,” *Tages-Post*, June 8, 1934 in OÖLA Sammlung Alfred Sighartner, Hs. 5.

<sup>107</sup> “Sorgenkind Fremdenverkehr,” *Der Fremdenverkehr* 9, no. 7 (July 31, 1936): 2.

Dopolavoro. (But it seems quite probable that Austrians, whose tourist trade hinged on the question of how able and willing Germans were to travel, sooner or later would have compared it to the apparent grandeur of the Nazis' Kraft durch Freude.) Neues Leben aimed to be catch-all organization for providing the masses with wholesome recreation through the preservation of the "good old Austrian intellectual and cultural heritage."<sup>108</sup> Enrollment was voluntary, and indeed entailed a fee. Those with a membership card gained discounted and sometimes exclusive access to a range of events: presentations of party-approved literature, plastic art, music, theater, cinema, radio programming, and educational lectures. They were also given the opportunity to join in group vacations, daytrips, and guided tours of local sights. As with the Hungarian "penny trains," these discounts were engineered as much to help keep the tourism industry afloat by stimulating demand as they were to "democratize" tourism. But despite party support, they seem to have been too short-lived and underdeveloped to attain the same popular reach. By the end of 1937, for example, the Vienna section of Neues Leben had organized only 30 bus trips and three special trains.<sup>109</sup>

The Neues Leben travel activities inclined, to a certain extent, towards urging Austrians to explore their homeland. According to a Fatherland Front party newspaper, the "necessary foundations" of the excursions organized through Neues Leben were "to open up to the Austrian his *Heimat*; to rouse in him concern for the community of his *Volk*, that he may care for it; to awaken and foster in him the need for personal edification [*Bildung*]; and, before all else, to bring joy to the people who travel and hike with us: that is our mission in this realm."<sup>110</sup> That

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<sup>108</sup> Such was Schuschnigg's own characterization of the program, according to *Mitteilungsblatt der Landessachwalterschaft Wien Neues Leben*, no. 7 (November, 1937), 2, quoted in Bärnthaler, Irmgard, *Die Vaterländische Front: Geschichte und Organisation* (Wien: Europa Verlag, 1971).

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 192–194.

<sup>110</sup> "Reisen im 'Neuen Leben,'" *Mitteilungsblatt der Landessachverwalterschaft Wien* 2, no. 2 (February 1938): 5.

Neues Leben authorities hoped their tours would advance the cause of *Heimatkunde* is evident in their insistence on employing guides who were also, in effect, competent homeland scholars. “Before all else,” they were to “be able to tell – to tell well and vividly – about the natural environment, landscape, history, and heritage of the destination and everything on the way.”<sup>111</sup>

Neues Leben survived for even less time than its parent régime. It therefore could not be truly representative of interwar Austrian domestic tourism; this honor belongs to another institution. If the most powerful mass instrument of homeland studies tourism in Hungary was the penny express train, one of the most significant in Austria was the motor coach service of the federal post office, or Postbus. Its function was similar: to expand travel possibilities by making them more affordable, thereby drawing the parts of the country closer together. The Postbus, however, was a rather different institution from the penny expresses. It was a vital supplement to the state railway system, since Austria’s mountainous terrain prevented the system from providing adequate, reliable coverage to all parts of the country. As one contemporary tourism magazine put it, the expansion of the postal bus service was akin to “deploying [a] wide-meshed net” that could more ably embrace alpine regions untouched (or untouchable) by the railways.<sup>112</sup>

Although the postal bus system grew considerably under the First Republic, it was an important, if unheralded, part of the legacy of the imperial state. Even after the Habsburgs ceased to rule in Austria, the postal buses of their republican successors wore the same black and yellow color scheme. The first lines opened in 1907, numbering seven by the following year and 37 on the eve of the war. These multiplied gradually to a peak of 232 by 1931, covering 153,000 km of

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> “Mit dem Postkraftwagen durch die Rebengelände Niederösterreichs und des Burgenlandes,” *Österreichische Sport- und Reisezeitung* 3, no. 10 (1937): 4–5.

roadway and serving over 576,000 riders per year.<sup>113</sup> But whereas the state enjoyed a monopoly on rail transportation, its bus service was not without its competitors, some of which operated across national borders. Companies such as Austrobus and Zentropa touted their own ability to deliver the excitement, comfort, and coverage of automotive travel to passengers on a budget.<sup>114</sup> They benefited from state subventions as early as 1910, but limited government resources meant that they flourished with the help of plentiful concessions. In fact, the depression nearly drove the state out of the motor coach business: private companies had received over 1,000 lines by 1930 and commanded nearly 75 percent of the market in 1932, at which point a law prohibiting “unhealthy competition” went into effect to help protect the post office. Beginning in 1935, however, the Postbus service was back on its feet, thanks to the economic upswing and an array of creative marketing strategies designed to boost sales.<sup>115</sup>

The postal bus system provided – and still provides – rural Austrians with access to cheap regional transportation, and was thus in the first place a public utility rather than a tourism-specific institution. But precisely because the buses went where trains could not, it was very easy for tourism promoters to advertise them as an ideal means of exploring the country. The Post Office’s 1935 summer schedule catalog took aim at tourists looking to vacation among cooler elevations, but who did not have the luxury of a private vehicle. “The traveler who wants to get

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<sup>113</sup> Ernst Popp and Kurt Lukner, *100 Jahre Generaldirektion für die Post- und Telegraphenverwaltung* (Wien: Rudolf Bohman, 1966), 64–71.

<sup>114</sup> The Austrobus firm took shape out of the merger of several Viennese sightseeing bus companies in 1932 and, by 1936, offered fares to Italy, Germany, and France, in addition to domestic destinations. It also launched its own eponymous (and short-lived) magazine, which exhibited a peculiarly sarcastic sense of humor. “15 Jahre Autorundfahrten,” *Austrobus* 1, no. 2 (1936): 2–3. On the subject of the company’s range and affordability, Austrobus apparently presented three of its fans with travel vouchers for penning the rhyme “Die Heimat und die weite Welt / zeigt ‘Austrobus’ – für wenig Geld!” See: “Der Austrobus-Verse-Wettbewerb,” *Austrobus* 1, no. 3 (1936): 11. According to American tourist and journalist William van Til, a ride on the Austrobus through downtown Vienna was still *comme il faut* for foreign sightseers in 1937. Van Til, William, *The Danube Flows through Fascism: Nine Hundred Miles in a Fold-Boat* (New York and London: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1938), 161.

<sup>115</sup> Popp and Lukner, 63, 71, and 79.

to know these mountain landscapes without the expenditure of all-too-much time and money will nurture this keen desire by finding inexpensive points of connection that will allow him to access all of the important places. Such connections are found through the Austrian Post Office and postal vehicle traffic, which reaches everywhere the rail network finds its natural end.”<sup>116</sup> The company’s official magazine, *Postbus*, promised that to travel its routes was to embark on “journeys of discovery,” which would let one “get to know” the “layout of the landscape” of all the *Bundesländer*.<sup>117</sup> In the rhetoric of personal discovery and exploration, the postal bus materials partake in some of the spirit of the Hungarian state railway’s exhortations to “know our country.” They take a different tone, however, in seeming to presume that Austrians will be tourists in their own country. The first issue of *Austrobus*, published by a private firm of the same name, took for granted that its readers were seasoned holidaymakers who would want to be kept abreast of news of how the Austrian tourism industry was developing – not ingrates who needed to be shamed into traveling domestically.<sup>118</sup>

One of the things that makes the *Postbus* a remarkable facet of interwar Austrian tourism is that this promotional discourse of exploration went well beyond the usual printed texts and images, making its way to the cinema on a scale that, for the period, was uncommonly grand. From 1927 to 1930, the postal service commissioned filmmaker Karl Köfinger to produce an ambitious series of quasi-documentarian films, called *Im Postkraftwagen durch Österreichs Alpenwelt* (In the Postal Bus through Austria’s Alpine World), which advertised some of the company’s more tourist-oriented bus lines. Because of its wide domestic and international exposure, a unique result of this very modern marketing campaign was that it took moviegoers

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<sup>116</sup> Bundesministerium für Handel und Verkehr, *Kraftwagenfahrten der österreichischen Postverwaltung*, Summer 1935 (Vienna: Bundesministerium für Handel und Verkehr, 1935).

<sup>117</sup> Franz Donath, “Entdeckungsfahrten im Autobus,” *Das Posthorn* 1, no. 1 (June-July 1933): 3–4.

<sup>118</sup> “Nichts liegt uns ferner...,” *Austrobus* 1, no. 1 (1936): 1.

on an extensive, yet intimate tour of the Austrian countryside. Moreover, Köfinger made the series in a way that granted the viewer a distinctly anthropological gaze, such that, taken together, the films amount to a grand ethnographical tour of the country's many *Heimats*.

Karl Köfinger (1879-1938) was originally trained as an electrical technician and served in a specialized “high voltage and lighting company” during the First World War. After returning to civilian life he assumed a post as a technical trade school instructor in Vienna. He entered the cinema world by way of employment in the electrical shop of the movie studio Schönbrunn, contributing to the production of several feature films in the early 1920s. Connections to the city officials of Baden bei Wien provided Köfinger an entrée to more prominent roles in cinema production, including directing. He earned his second credit as director with the 45-minute tourism advertisement *Die Thermenstadt Baden* (1924). He helmed a number of other documentary and promotional films before beginning work on the *Postkraftwagen* project.<sup>119</sup>

The series comprised a total of 34 short films, each with a length between 12 and 20 minutes. All were originally silent, but a number of the films were rereleased with soundtracks some time later. Distributed first by the firm of Hugo Engel and later by Huschak & Co., the films appeared in Austrian cinemas alongside the weekly newsreels as *Kulturfilme*, or movies for public edification. They enjoyed the “widest circulation” outside of Vienna, with versions featuring Italian, French, English, Spanish, and Swedish intertitles for consumption abroad (including the onboard cinemas of certain transatlantic liners).<sup>120</sup>

The films visually accomplished their ambitious but piecemeal process of connection first of all by guiding the viewer through topographical representations of the locations encountered

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<sup>119</sup> Josef Navratil, *Das Werk des österreichischen Kulturfilmproduzenten Ing. Karl Köfinger am Beispiel einer Serie von Fremdenverkehrswerbefilm*, Schriftenreihe des Österreichischen Filmarchivs 23 (Vienna: Österreichischen Gesellschaft für Filmwissenschaft, Kommunikations- und Mediaforschung, 1989), 9–10.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 19.

in all twenty-seven journeys. The title card of each film was accompanied by a simplified map that showed the settlements, major landmarks, and political boundaries relevant to the bus route in question. The tiny animation of a *Postbus* would proceed from its origin to its destination, highlighting the path it took and the names of its stations; occasionally, there would be an animated train of the Austrian Federal Railway as well, to emphasize how buses could traverse terrain which forbade travel by rail.

Ultimately, however, these maps were but charming ornamentation that articulated through a bird's-eye view what the on-location footage delivered through the camera. The *Postkraftwagen* movies were not narrative films with coherent plots or characters. Frequent long and tracking shots of the moving bus set against the landscape established and reestablished many times over what two things were for sale: Austria and the experience of traveling through it. In this respect the series operated rather like a long and comprehensive gallery of "living" tourism posters. Nevertheless, the preset itineraries and basic centrality of the bus itself lent the episodes plot- and character-like elements that added extra layers of drama to the proceedings. In conjunction with Köfinger's varied and sometimes experimental cinematographic choices, these elements helped create a more engaging viewing experience than one might expect from a silent-era marketing campaign. Numerous point of view shots looking out from the cabin of the vehicle simply but effectively afforded the viewer a berth on the trip. Other shots in this style show both the passing scenery as well as the interior of the loaded bus, conveying even more directly a sense of what it would be like to ride in the company of other travelers. Occasional scenes of passengers waiting at stations, checking timetables, purchasing tickets, boarding/exiting the bus, or loading their possessions supplemented these more immediate experiences of a journey in



progress with ones of witnessing how one became a “real” postal bus passenger and how one was to behave in that role.

Therefore the second way in which the *Postkraftwagen* series broadcast visions of a connected Austria was precisely through such techniques. They transformed the viewer from a traveler going from place to place within the country into a participant of a grand ethnographical tour of the Austrian *Heimat*. The frequent stops at obscure villages along roads of uncertain quality portended by Postbus schedules established pleasant preconditions for a romantic odyssey that brought the traveler face-to-face with colorful folk traditions. A ticket to ride on the federal postal route bought more than a means of transportation; it also granted admission to a living exhibition of the cultural specificities that made Austria what it was. In this way, *Im Postkraftwagen durch Österreichs Alpenwelt* showed how travel knitted together a country of *Länder* into a complete, vibrant, and distinctively Austrian patchwork.

Köfing's films were saturated with images that presented Postbus journeys as ethnographic or *Heimatkundlich* experiences. Title cards often displayed phrases emphasizing that what the viewer was seeing in fact represented signal characteristics of a given region's inhabitants. In one scene from Film 22 (1930), as the Postbus passes through the Ötz Valley we meet a spindly, bearded old man toting a large wooden mallet and other implements. The relevant title card extrapolates from his individual appearance that “pithy, weatherproof frames” like his are “the distinguishing marks of this region's breed of people [*Menschenschlag*].” In Film 14 (1929), a set of titles purports that, from the episode's display of a party of merry villagers – some play instruments in foreground, others dance in the background – “we get to know the particular nature [*Eigenart*] of Tyrolean folkways.” On other occasions, scenery and people merge, as in Film 9 (1929) when we see a pair of shawled, black-clad women

(accompanied by a child) pushing handcarts along the shoulder of the highway. “Scattered over the undulating landscape,” the titles inform us, “are peasant farms, the products of which are brought to market in the typical down-home way [*landesüblicher Art*].” Finally, certain shots deftly brought out the historical genealogical currents flowing beneath all *Volkskundliche* presentations. In Film 21 (ca. 1930), the viewer arrives in Paznaun, an obscure hamlet that the intertitles assert to be the oldest settlement of the Ischgl River valley in western Tyrol, and is introduced to a descendant of one of the area’s original families.

But the camera could also capture – allegedly – the quaint visual potpourri strewn along the barely-beaten paths of country byways. In another moment from Film 21, the trip from Landeck into the Paznaun Valley is felicitously interrupted by a “peasant orchestra” (*Bauernkapelle*), as announced by the title card. The encounter, very possibly staged, celebrates the droll serendipities of rural living even as it acknowledges them to be potential disruptions to timely travel. Film 7 (1926/27) offers a more voyeuristic take on the same theme. There, a jovial band of the “romantics of the highway” punctuates a trip through the Mur River valley. Their ill-fitting clothes, dark skin, and wooden caravan suggest them to be Roma: exotic specimens among the *Alpenwelt*’s splendid array of peoples.

Thus the *Postkraftwagen* advertising campaign shared many of the core tendencies of the *Heimatkunde* literature of the period, even if it lacked the detail of the latter’s empiricist ambitions and amateur erudition. It created something akin to a tableau vivant of Michael Haberlandt’s *Österreich: seine Land und Volk und seine Kultur* in a spectacular multi-volume album of motion pictures, promoting the “real” experience of travel by Postbus while also offering itself as a “virtual” copy of the same.

Perhaps unwittingly, the *Postkraftwagen* films resonate with the echoes of an earlier attempt to create a virtual tour through Austria, *Die ungarisch-österreichische Monarchie in Wort und Bild*, published in twenty-four volumes between 1886 and 1902. Also known as the *Kronprinzenwerk* in honor of its patron and mastermind, Crown Prince Rudolf von Habsburg, the series aimed to glorify the linguistic and cultural diversity of the Dual Monarchy by visually and symbolically uniting its various peoples in a collaborative project of monumental proportions. As one historian has argued, however, the project scraped against the shoals of its own dedication to ethnographic comprehensiveness. The 587 texts and 529 illustrations, parceled out among separate volumes for each group it claimed to represent, served to reify ethnic differences rather than demonstrate the harmony of the empire. In this it also reflected specifically dualist cultural politics, as six of the volumes were apportioned for Hungary and placed within the detached control of Hungarian editors and a Hungarian-language version appeared alongside the standard German one.<sup>121</sup>

The *Kronprinzenwerk* was not an advertisement by design. But, read from a certain perspective, it did try to “sell” the Habsburg monarchy – however unconvincingly – as a political space in which even nationalists should feel that their people could count on a welcoming home. Köfinger’s *Postkraftwagen* series had the outward goal of filling seats on the Austrian state bus lines. But, taking the separate films as a single text, they had the greater cultural effect of illustrating how an institution inherited from the empire helped the First Republic knit together the *Bundesländer* into something like a cohesive whole. Indeed, although the title of the series suggests that the films only concern themselves with alpine regions, the final installment, “Kreuz

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<sup>121</sup> Regina Bendix, “Ethnology, Cultural Reification, and the Dynamics of Difference in the Kronprinzenwerk,” in *Creating the Other: Ethnic Conflict and Nationalism in Habsburg Central Europe*, ed. Nancy M. Wingfield (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2003), 149–66. Bendix notes that the German versions “sold reasonably well” (thanks in part to institutional subscriptions), while the Hungarian version was “a financial flop.”

und Quer durchs Burgenland” (Film 27, ca. 1930), incorporated the least mountainous of all the *Länder*. Vienna itself makes an appearance in Films 1 and 2, which depict greater or lesser stretches of the route between the capital and Mariazell.

After the imposition of the *Ständesstaat* in 1934, the echoes of Habsburg Austria in the promotional materials of the bus service only grew louder and clearer. This was entirely in keeping with the regime’s attempts to identify itself with the Holy Roman Empire, which Dolfuss, Schuschnigg, and company presented as the spiritually and morally superior “First Reich,” to the Nazis’ Third.<sup>122</sup> The official magazine of the postal lines, *Das Posthorn*, opened its run in 1933 with the rather grandiloquent proposition that the buses and their passengers were helping to carry on the grand purpose of the old empire. It invoked the memory of Prince Eugene of Savoy, the Habsburgs’ most celebrated general and statesman of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, honoring him as a brilliant leader, patron of the arts and sciences, and steward of commerce. Even though “not a single drop of German blood flowed in this man’s veins,” these many virtues combined to make him “a virtual Austrian *kat’ exochen* [par excellence], as the ideal of every Austrian person.” The article lamented that Austrians had “recognized the singular, exclusive correctness” of the prince’s “world-political conception of Austria’s duty and mission” only too late. But all was not lost. Something could yet be salvaged of Prince Eugene’s magnificent legacy, for “world economy and world culture still offer missions that we wish to fulfill – as good Austrians [and] as good mediators between West and East – which we do not wish to sacrifice to any schemes that erect barriers between Morning and Evening. Plainly, the melody

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<sup>122</sup> Anton Staudinger, “Austrofaschistische ‘Österreich’-Ideologie,” in *Austrofaschismus: Politik - Ökonomie - Kultur, 1933-1938*, ed. Emmerich Tálos and Wolfgang Neugebauer (Vienna: LIT Verlag, 2005), 30–36; Robert Pyrah, “Enacting Encyclicals? Cultural Politics and ‘Clerical Fascism’ in Austria, 1933-1938,” in *Clerical Fascism in Interwar Europe*, ed. Matthew Feldman, Marius Turda, and Tudor Georgescu (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 160.

has become too serious for the *Posthorn*. But it will find listeners – willing readers, hopefully – in the big, yellow postal service bus that rolls over Austria’s highways. Its purpose is fulfilled, if someone or other reflects on our beloved country that he sees as he glides by.”<sup>123</sup>

Most notable in this passage is its description of Eugene of Savoy as a *non*-German paragon of Austrianness and the way it frames the Austrian “mission” as one of bridging East and West. With these rhetorical turns “old” and “new” Austria are linked across the gulf of 1918. The passage resonates equally with the “family of peoples” mentality of the *Kronprinzenwerk* as with the *Ständesstaat* strategy of deemphasizing German nationality as a core component of Austrian identity. If in Köfinger’s films the postal bus was the needle and roads the thread that stitched together Austria’s many *Heimats*, then here it was the wheeled scion of imperial grandeur, heir to men and ideals that transcended both time and ethnicity.

The influence of Karl Köfinger’s *Postkraftwagen* series seeped into other realms of popular tourist culture. We can find apparent traces of its subject and style in later Austrian-produced features, such as Karl Lamač’s *Im weißen Rößl* (1935), which will feature in Chapter 5, and Max Neufeld’s *Singende Jugend* (1936). The latter, known in English as *Orphan Boy of Vienna*, seems to draw heavily on Köfinger’s work for its portrayal of a journey from Vienna to Tyrol via the Großglockner-Hochalpenstraße (Großglockner High Alpine Road). The film tells the story of young Toni, who, though impoverished and without parents, is gifted with a talented voice. Fate bestows upon him a place in the famed Vienna Boys’ Choir, and with it a chance at a better lot in life. Not long after Toni’s arrival the group heads to the Hotel Sängerknaben in Tyrol, where they enjoy a spell of wholesome country living while serving as the resort’s in-house entertainers. The montage that depicts their cross-country road trip bears all the signs of a

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<sup>123</sup> “Zum Geleit,” *Das Posthorn* 1, no. 1 (June-July, 1933): 1.

transplanted *Postkraftwagen* film. Long shots of the choir's open-air bus gliding through hairpin turns, past cheering crowds, and under the shadows of roadside crucifixes alternate with point of view shots of cityscapes and other landmarks that share the boys' travel experiences with the viewer.

Were this sequence removed from the rest of the film, it would resemble nothing else than a tourism advertisement in which the viewer is removed from the metropolis and deposited in the mountains for a restorative provincial retreat (albeit in the company of kindergartners). However, because the Großglocknerstraße features so prominently, this scene confers added ideological significance to the cinematic conventions of bus travel.<sup>124</sup> Begun in 1930 under the First Republic and finished in 1935 under the *Ständestaat*, the Hochalpenstraße connected the states of Carinthia and Salzburg through the Hochtorn Pass. The Dollfuss regime did not hesitate to take credit for the road's completion and presented it as a public-works monument to the strength and sovereignty of the Austrian state.<sup>125</sup> Like the humble Postbus that rolled upon it, the Hochalpenstraße brought pieces of the country closer together; like the bus, it suggested (on a much larger scale) that Austrians were masters of their own *Alpenwelt*. The fact that it traversed the Hohe Tauern range near Austria's highest peak, the eponymous Großglockner, only added to its symbolic value.

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<sup>124</sup> For a thorough treatment of the movie's ideological context and significance, see: Robert Dassanowsky, "Screening Transcendence: Austria's Emigrantenfilm and the Construction of an Austrofascist Identity in Singende Jugend," *Austrian History Yearbook* 39 (2008): 157–75.

<sup>125</sup> Georg Rigele, *Die Großglockner-Hochalpenstraße: Zur Geschichte des österreichischen Monuments* (Vienna: WUV-Universitätsverlag, 1998).

### 3.6 CONCLUSION

In March 1938, the very concept of Austrian domestic tourism – along with certain Austrian concepts of “homeland” – entered into a seven-year coma. Union with the German Empire meant, obviously, that there could be no more travel to, from, or within Austria; as either destination or origin, the territory formerly occupied by the *Bundesrepublik* was an integral political unit of Germany. Gone, too, were the *Länder* that comprised interwar Austria. They were replaced with new administrative districts called *Gaue*, and while some of them bore the same names as the old states (Styria, Carinthia, Salzburg, and Vienna), others were combined (Tyrol-Vorarlberg), reimagined (Upper Danube and Lower Danube for Upper and Lower Austria), or deleted outright (Burgenland). The ultimate purpose of this territorial reshuffling was clear: to smash the geographical entity called Austria, embed its fragments into the expanding mosaic of the *Reich*, and, as far as possible, sever the links between longstanding provincial identities and anything other than Greater Germany.

The fact that the Nazis took pains to redraw the map in this way testifies to the enduring influence of the Habsburg monarchy. It was not enough to destroy the recently-invented Austrian state; the very shapes of the equally-recently-vanquished dynasty’s possessions had to be destroyed as well. This was, in a sense, an attempt to declare the final victory of *Großdeutschland* in a struggle of empires that had begun in the 1860s: Hitler won where the Hohenzollerns had not. The Anschluss, while it lasted, stood as a “correction” of the slow historical divorce of the Holy Roman Empire from its ever-more-nominal imperial family. It was meant to be the conclusive exile of the Habsburgs from *memory* into mere *history*.

In a much less drastic way, the relationship between homeland-identities and domestic tourism in the interwar period also reveals lingering traces of the world that the Habsburgs

wrought. There is an affinity between the structure of the Dual Monarchy and the ways the Austrian and Hungarian “models” of homeland looked in the 1920s and 1930s. The Kingdom of Hungary – setting aside the fact it encompassed multiple historical realms – was something outwardly solid, and its ruling élite worked, when possible, to administer it in an increasingly centralized, unitary fashion. The question of borders was nearly as important in the Dualist period as in the boundary-obsessed post-Trianon era; after all, the Hungarian frontier was where Franz Joseph doffed the *Kaiser’s* diadem and switched it for the crown of *König*. Opposite Hungary, by contrast, was a bricolage of crownlands and imperial provinces, which, when not called with their individual names, were defined collectively as *Die im Reichsrat vertretenen Königreiche und Länder* (“The Kingdoms and Lands Represented in the Imperial Council”) – or, more commonly, as Cisleithania; that is, by nothing more than their location west and north of the River Leitha. In addition to being unwieldy, this identity was also historically flimsy, dating only to 1867. Tyrol, Carinthia, Salzburg, Vorarlberg, Vienna, and, arguably to a lesser extent, Upper and Lower Austria – not to mention the rest – were geographical concepts with long pasts. It is perhaps little surprise that the Republic of Austria could not compete for the dignity of *Heimat* in the same weight class as the Kingdom of Hungary.

Given that this, roughly speaking, was the structure of the empire when “homeland studies” was gaining traction in both its halves, it is a plausible (if certainly incomplete) explanation for why discourses of “homeland” differed as they did after 1918. Joined under the same dynastic roof, connected within the same imperial-continental web of culture and ideas, and working in response to the constitutional structures that shaped the major institutions of their world, German-speaking and Magyar-speaking homeland scholars could not but weave the



influences of the living monarchy into their work. This perhaps goes without saying. But the death of the monarchy did not rip up the fabric they had begun.

The interwar Hungarian tourist industry was by no means the only one of its period to inject domestic tourism with the ethics of nation-building, as Orvar Löfgren has shown in cases from northern Europe and North America and Rudy Koshar for late-Weimar Germany.<sup>126</sup> What makes its situation interesting, though, is the broader context of post-imperial cultural adjustment in which it unfolded. Tourist culture contributed to nation-building in more than a generic sense. It prompted confrontation with the harsh fact that Hungary had been reduced not only territorially, but also in terms of international prestige and regional cultural hegemony. The Hungary to “know” in 1920 was neither as vast nor as important as the one from only six years earlier; nor was it any longer the vehicle of Magyar cultural supremacy that its shared status in the Dual Monarchy gave it both power and latitude to be.

Of course, a similar fate befell the Austrian half of the monarchy, but Hungarian nationalists probably felt the sting of the fall more deeply. Whereas few coherent, specifically *Austrian* nationalist discourses were in circulation until the Fatherland Front attempted to enforce its own after 1933, in Hungary the discourses of national upheaval and alienation were many, and they all contained a particular image of the boundaries of that nation. Paradoxically, even though the legal definition of the country shrank, the amount of untraveled homeland and what a Hungarian needed to “get to know” seemed only to have grown. In Austria, come what may, the homeland was always nearby. Expanding it to fill the territorial outline of the Republic was

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<sup>126</sup> Orvar Löfgren, “Know Your Country: A Comparative Perspective on Tourism and Nation Building in Sweden,” in *Being Elsewhere: Tourism, Consumer Culture, and Identity in Modern Europe and North America*, ed. Shelley Baranowski and Ellen Furlough (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 137–53; Koshar, *German Travel Cultures*, 75.

certainly *possible*, but not *necessary*. There was less to not know, less to not travel, and less reason for tourism promoters to panic.

#### **4.0 THE CLEVER HUNGARIAN HANGS HIS WATERING CAN ON THE WALL: “PAID HOSPITALITY” AS CIVILIZING MISSION IN RURAL HUNGARY**

In 1934, the Hungarian tourism-promotion organization OMWE (Országos Magyar Weekend Egyesület, or National Hungarian Weekend Association) prepared two works for publication. The first was *The Traveler’s Book* (*Az utas könyve*), which OMWE debuted in 1935 as a clothbound “handbook” filling 704 pages and weighing 1.513 kg (3.33 lbs), compiled by a team of 12 editors, all of whom were male. Its title page boasted of an aristocratic pedigree by way of its so-called “founder” Count István Széchenyi, heir to one of the most important family names in Hungarian history. The second was a little seven-page pamphlet titled *The Necessaries of Paid Hospitality* (*A fizetővendéglátás kellékei*), written by an obscure female author known only by her husband’s name.

Judging by their titles, origins, and comparative physical presence, it would not be immediately apparent that these were, in effect, companion volumes. They shared the same fundamental goal – to stimulate vacationing in the small towns and villages of rural Hungary – but did so, as it were, from opposite directions. The *Traveler’s Book* represented the first-ever attempt to produce a truly comprehensive guide to Hungary’s hotels, spas, guesthouses, tourist attractions, and transportation network. Readers could access detailed information on where to stay and what to do in 330 communities, ranging in size and centrality from Budapest to sleepy villages on the eastern plain. The *Necessaries*, written and distributed while the *Traveler’s Book*

was being compiled, was designed as a primer on how to convert the peasant home into the kind of place an urban tourist could rest comfortably at a reasonable price. It described, among other things, how a rented room should be arranged, what a peasant hostess should cook and how she should present it, and decreed that the “personnel” on hand should be “clean and pretty – ‘proper,’ as they say.”<sup>1</sup> Ten thousand copies of this pamphlet, a veritable training manual on how to modernize the peasant homestead and make it suitable for cash-carrying urban guests, went out to the heads of farming households (*gazda*) across Hungary.<sup>2</sup> Unlike the *Necessaries*, which the élite bestowed upon those of a lower station, the *Traveler’s Book* became a token of friendship among peers. As one member reported to the group’s November 1935 assembly, the volume was so successful in his hometown of Vas that the city’s white-collar workers were giving it to each other as a gift.<sup>3</sup> Anyone not on the receiving end of such an exchange could, of course, buy their own copy at a bookstore or order one from the OMWE central office. The cost for card-carrying OMWE members was 5.70 pengő; for the general public, 9.70.<sup>4</sup> Had a smallholding peasant farmer from western Hungary (Transdanubia) wished to have gotten hold

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<sup>1</sup> The earliest edition of the pamphlet (that I am aware of) did not name an author. It appears undated in PML X.221 (Országos Magyar Weekend Egyesület Pest megyei csoportja iratai) as “A fizető vendéglátás kellékei.” Both author and year of publication for this edition are confirmed in Károly Széchényi, *Az Országos Magyar Vendégforgalmi Szövetség működésének rövid története 1932. évtől – 1936. évig és az 1937. évi összefoglaló jelentése* (Budapest: Czerman Nyomda, 1938), 12. The pamphlet was reprinted later by Globus (which is the edition held at the OSZK in Budapest) with Tiborné (Mrs.) Irsai Szabó as the author; Dr. Géza Orel received credit for adaptation. Tiborné Irsai Szabó, *A fizető vendéglátás kellékei* (Budapest: Az Országos Magyar Vendégforgalmi Szövetsége, 1939). Citations are from the latter unless otherwise noted. The quotation cited here appears on p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> According to ethnographers Edit Fél and Tamás Hofer, “the head, lord, and ruler of the household [was] usually the oldest married man or widower, the *gazda*, ‘the head of the family.’” They note, however, that the term also denoted the holder of an estate capable of supporting itself, usually 20 to 24 or more cadastral yokes. (1.42 acres = 1 yoke.) Thus a *gazda* could be a peasant smallholder or a noble magnate; the word apparently did not distinguish economic status beyond this basic point. Edit Fél and Tamás Hofer, *Proper Peasants: Traditional Life in a Hungarian Village* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969), 113 and 113fn18.

<sup>3</sup> “Jegyzőkönyv” (November 15, 1935), MOL K148 914. csomó, 17. tétel, 6363 szám, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> “Utmutatás a nyaralás iránt érdeklődők felvilágosítására,” in PML X.221 (Országos Magyar Weekend Egyesület Pest megyei csoportja iratai), 3.

of a copy at the latter price – though it is barely conceivable any such peasant ever lived – he would have had to surrender one-third to one-fifth of his farm’s annual net yield.<sup>5</sup>

The differences between these two publications reflected an inherent division of perspective in the tourism-promotion movement that produced them. The goal of the village tourism movement, also called the “paying guest” or “paid hospitality” movement, was to foster a mutually-beneficial exchange between urban guests and rural hosts. Peasants would receive precious cash and knowledge on better, healthier living. Their guests would receive the relaxation and fresh air that they needed for a low price; they would also receive the satisfaction of helping the domestic economy and become reacquainted with the “real Hungarian culture” still preserved in peasant life. Although we should not underappreciate the real value that the interaction offered to the peasant hosts, or sense only cynicism in the promoters’ motivations, ultimately village tourism was more about adapting the village to fit the tourists (and please the village élite) than about raising the peasants’ living standards *per se*.

Whereas the process by which urban Hungarians were supposed to improve their “Hungarianness” remained only vaguely defined, village tourism activists had much more to say about the process of changing peasants’ lifestyles to match the expectations of urban visitors. They published many thousands of copies of pamphlets and manuals that contained precise “do’s” and “don’ts” for peasant hosts to follow. They wrote newspaper articles about “civilization conquering the countryside” through village tourism. OMWE set up a community development committee to establish a system of standards to regulate rural guesthouses, offering

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<sup>5</sup> This includes farmers with holdings between 5-100 cadastral yokes (in Hungarian: *hold*). Péter Gunst has calculated that between 1929 and 1941 the average net yield of a peasant in Transdanubia working 5-10 yokes would have been 27 pengős; peasants working 50-100 yokes averaged 46 pengős. Péter Gunst, ed., *Hungarian Agrarian Society: From the Emancipation of the Serfs (1848) to the Re-Privatization of Land (1998)* (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 1998), 218.

its seal of approval only to those households which adhered to those guidelines. The committee received subventions from the government, which it distributed to applicant communities for construction projects that made them more attractive to vacationers. In short, for all of the village tourism movement's good intentions, its proponents seemed willing to perceive the crisis of the Hungarian peasantry only within limited, "self-centered" parameters. The solutions they proposed were mainly concerned with creating pleasant spaces where urban white-collar workers could enjoy inexpensive summer holidays without being driven to take their money abroad. They took it for granted that shaping the countryside according to urban tastes was the same as improving life there. Thus theirs was a mission to civilize, even if it was far milder than colonial examples.

This chapter offers a critical examination of the village tourism movement in Hungary between the two world wars. Although they did bring in a limited amount of capital to desperate agrarians, the "community development" initiatives undertaken by groups like OMWE showed greater interest in "civilizing" peasants than in changing the economic system that kept them "backward." At the same time, village tourism preserved the unequal division of leisure in Hungarian society, even as its proponents sought legal guarantees for time off of work, by inventing new labors for peasant hosts to perform. In this way, the history of the movement not only offers a new perspective on urban-rural relations in post-imperial Hungary, but also illuminates questions fundamental to the history of tourism itself: who gets a share of leisure resources – time, money, space – how much, and why?

#### 4.1 THE EVOLUTION OF OMWE FROM POPULARIZERS OF LEISURE TO DEVELOPERS OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

In 1929, three engineers founded an organization whose aim was to promote a concept new to Hungarian society: the weekend. Up to this time, no single legal standard defined how much time off work an employee could expect to receive; traditionally, employers granted it at their discretion. Civil servants were a partial exception, in that the terms of their labor were the most specifically regulated, but even they could count on Sundays alone to be completely labor-free. OMWE, therefore, did not begin its career as an advocate of rural development, but rather as a civic pressure-group that lobbied for legally-ensured leisure time for “working citizen[s].”<sup>6</sup>

It is clear that the “citizens” OMWE claimed to represent, at least in its first few years of operation, lived and worked in urban settings. Less certain is whether this included, or whether OMWE even intended for it to include, members of the industrial working class. Press reports from 1929 and 1930 ambiguously refer to the “difficult weekly labors” of “working society,”<sup>7</sup> work-weeks of “drudgery” (*robotos munka*, a phrase seasoned with overtones of serfdom),<sup>8</sup> and a drive to “domesticate” the foreign-born practice of the weekend “even for the metropolitan public of a humbler station” – a frustratingly relative euphemism.<sup>9</sup> The fact that founder and executive director Péter Kaffka declared one of OMWE’s goals to be the “implementation of

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<sup>6</sup> “Rövidesen megalakul a Magyar Weekend Szövetség,” *Magyar Országos Tudósító* XI, no. 258 (November 12, 1929): 10.

<sup>7</sup> “Megalakult az Országos Magyar Weekend Szövetség,” *Magyar Országos Tudósító* XI, no. 280 (December 7, 1929): 13.

<sup>8</sup> “Megkezdete munkáját az Országos Magyar Weekend-Szövetség,” *Magyar Országos Tudósító* XII, no. 57 (March 10, 1930): 23.

<sup>9</sup> “Az Országos Magyar Weekend Szövetség első weekend telepe,” *Magyar Országos Tudósító* XII, no. 100 (May 5, 1930): 19.

*Dopolavoro* institutions” in Hungary suggests that the association harbored ambitions of one day encompassing all levels of productive urban society.<sup>10</sup>

More confusing still is OMWE’s relationship with the state. OMWE and its successor, OMVESZ, was never under direct control of the state authorities, let alone the state-run leisure program of Káffka’s dreams. It was a “non-political,” not-for-profit voluntary organization.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, it enjoyed persistent moral support from all levels of government: ministries, county lords-lieutenant (*főispánok*), and members of the state bureaucracy at the local level. From 1932 onward, OMWE operated under the aegis of the Union of Social Associations (Társadalmi Egyesületek Szövetsége), a quasi-official, but loosely joined clearinghouse of “Christian and national” civic organizations.<sup>12</sup> Ministerial representatives attended association meetings and state agents at various levels enrolled as members, but in neither capacity is there obvious evidence that they exercised the will of the government.

OMWE’s leaders saw their group as the champion of overburdened Hungarian professionals and office workers in need of an escape from the stifling confines of the city. Before 1932, the association focused its efforts on trying to build “colonies” of weekend houses in Budapest’s hilly suburbs and undeveloped rural fringes in Pest County.<sup>13</sup> The advent of the state railway’s “penny express” trains made it possible for OMWE to extend its vision of

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<sup>10</sup> “Az Országos Magyar Weekend Egyesület közgyűlése,” *Magyar Országos Tudósító* XII, no. 102 (May 7, 1930): 1. Káffka, as a civil engineer, was a committed modernizer and technocrat who called for a “Hungarian Mussolini” to rationalize the country’s social and economic life. Mária M. Kovács, *Liberal Professions and Illiberal Politics: Hungary from the Habsburgs to the Holocaust* (Washington, D.C. and New York: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Oxford University Press, 1994), 91.

<sup>11</sup> OMWE’s charter expressly forbade its association with any party-political activity or viewpoints. Károly Káffka and Károly Széchényi, eds., *Az utas könyve: Magyar utazási kézikönyve és útmutató* (Budapest: Országos Magyar Weekend Egyesület, 1935), 26. The successor organization, OMVESZ, continued this restriction. *Országos Magyar Vendégforgalmi Szövetség Alapszabályai* (Budapest: Globus, 1935), 3. Located in PML X.221 (Országos Magyar Weekend Egyesület Pest megyei csoportja iratai).

<sup>12</sup> Széchényi, *Az Országos Magyar Vendégforgalmi Szövetség működésének rövid története*, 3.

<sup>13</sup> In the spring of 1930 OMWE purchased 2,000 cadastral holds (2,840 acres, or roughly 1149.31 hectares) of land in Érd (Pest County) to this end. The ultimate fate of the colony project is unknown. “Az Országos Magyar Weekend Szövetség első weekend telepe,” *Magyar Országos Tudósító* XII, no. 100 (May 5, 1930): 19.



weekend travel beyond places only in the immediate vicinity of the capital. *Weekend*, OMWE's (summer) seasonal weekly newspaper, reflected this in its selection of articles, which balanced the rowing and weekend-house culture popular along the metropolitan Danube with the short-term trips offered through MÁV's rail discount program. The expansion of leisure time now became more closely and explicitly tied to proliferating opportunities for domestic tourism and the improvement of the Hungarian tourist economy as a whole.<sup>14</sup>

With the depression's destructive effects on domestic tourism, in tandem with the general rise of populist nationalism in Hungarian political discourse, OMWE's leaders began to voice the familiar anxieties. Too many Hungarians were traveling abroad; too much capital was crossing the border; not enough countrymen knew enough about Hungary to appreciate it. In 1933, organization president Count Károly Széchenyi declared, "Questions of domestic tourism and weekend recreation have by now emerged from the frame of social privilege, exceeded the boundaries of a public health problem, and developed into an exceptionally important economic question."<sup>15</sup> Széchenyi and other promoters thus infused the practice of tourism itself with the rhetoric of national service and social improvement. This turn was crucial for the initiation of the village tourism movement – and not just as embodied in OMWE. The white-collar clerk who took his family out-of-town for the weekend or went off for a summer vacation did more than rest his body and refresh his mind: his leisure time and his wages, now both especially precious resources in tough times, contributed to the strength of the commonweal.<sup>16</sup> Taking a train or

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<sup>14</sup> Széchenyi, *Az Országos Magyar Vendégforgalmi Szövetség működésének rövid története*, 3–8. Cf. "Az Országos Magyar Weekend Egyesület diszközgyűlése," *Magyar Országos Tudostól* XV, no. 162 (July 20, 1933): 3.

<sup>15</sup> Széchenyi, *Az Országos Magyar Vendégforgalmi Szövetség működésének rövid története*, 4–5.

<sup>16</sup> As Elemér Preszly, *főispán* (lord lieutenant) of Pest County urged at an OMWE propaganda event in 1934, Budapesters who vacationed at sites close to home (namely in Pest County) "not only use them for their health, not only satisfy their desires for relaxation, but in the long run carry out service to the homeland, inasmuch as money that might otherwise migrate abroad in this case stays at home, enters the circulation of Hungarian economic life, and enlarges the wealth of the nation." "Preszly Elemér főispán beszéde az Országos Magyar Weekend Egyesület

paying for a guesthouse could be considered a moral act of patriotism; tourism could serve a social cause.

As discussed in Chapter 3, another important consequence of the depression was that it inspired a commitment to widening the market for leisure mobility beyond its traditionally aristocratic and haute-bourgeois orientation. OMWE stepped forward as a key player in this field when, in the face of considerable financial hardship, it published the *Traveler's Book* in 1935.<sup>17</sup> The publication of such a tome was possible thanks to OMWE's successful efforts to expand its membership and install branch offices throughout the country. Its rolls shot from 600 members in 1933 to a peak of 2,036 in the following year.<sup>18</sup> Although an overwhelming proportion of those members (ca. 70 percent) came from Budapest, by 1935 the association's reach had extended to include 28 regional offices and more than 200 local representatives.<sup>19</sup> The locals were responsible for providing the central office in Budapest with localized data for the book, although the selection probably was influenced in part by the fact that the featured communities helped sponsor its publication. Their participation resulted in what was probably one of the broadest and most practical works of *honismeret* of the era. Even if the knowledge gained from this overview spoke in superficial terms narrowly applicable to the needs of tourists, the reader could now hold in his or her hand what was, in essence, a catalog of the economic and cultural life of the country.

The appearance of the *Traveler's Book* marked a decisive shift in the emphasis of OMWE's activities. The association had long committed itself to improving the lives of the

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propaganda-előadóján," *Magyar Országos Tudósító* XVI (May 1, 1934): 8. The text is a paraphrase of Preszly's address.

<sup>17</sup> OMWE did not have the resources to produce the book on its own, so the editorial staff worked for free and received contributions from the cities and villages named in the book. Széchenyi, *Az Országos Magyar Vendégforgalmi Szövetség működésének rövid története*, 14.

<sup>18</sup> Széchenyi, *Az Országos Magyar Vendégforgalmi Szövetség működésének rövid története*, 10, 18.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 15–16.

urban middle class by expanding recreational activities for those “slaving away in the office or workshop” who found the “family populous and the resources few.”<sup>20</sup> The weekend *per se* had always represented for OMWE activists a social good, as a matter of public health, a boon to labor efficiency, and building-block of a stronger economy. But now vacationing came to rural society – not as the means of its refreshment, but as its deliverance from poverty and cultural backwardness. The successful stimulation of the Hungarian tourism industry would not only funnel capital into the derelict provincial hamlets; money would be accompanied by hygienic modern mores.

First, however, OMWE would have to arouse Hungarian society to an appreciation of the countryside as a vacationer’s haven. “The houses of thousands upon thousands of idyllically beautiful Hungarian villages sleep all summer long in the gloom of obscurity,” repined the prominent *homme de lettres* Zsolt Harsányi in his foreword to the volume. “They would gladly give room and board for a third, even a quarter of the prices for summer accommodations that one sees in the newspapers; but due to a lack of organization, this untapped potential goes to waste. Seeker and supplier don’t meet one another.”<sup>21</sup> The *Traveler’s Book* ostensibly realigned the two through the unprecedented work of indexing, as far as it could, every last rentable bed in the provinces. In previous travel guides, those provinces had been mere auxiliaries to mighty Budapest; here, if only by strength of page count, they overpowered it. Thus finance minister Tihamér Fabinyi declared to the reader, “At least one thing is certain: the unknown Hungarian

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<sup>20</sup> Zsolt Harsányi, “Előszó,” in *Az utas könyve: Magyar utazási kézikönyve és utmutató*, ed. Károly Kaffka and Károly Széchenyi (Budapest: Országos Magyar Weekend Egyesület, 1935), v – vi.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

countryside needs to be the protagonist of this book; that unknown Hungarian countryside whose uncovering is a goal we cannot work with too much fervor to achieve.”<sup>22</sup>

Certainly, OMWE and its collaborators intended the fruits of their labor to fall in a way that they imagined would be equitable to both town and country. But if, as Fabinyi exhorted, their intention was to make the countryside a “protagonist” in the ensuing drama, this they did not do. Rather, the countryside became the scenery against which the promoters of village tourism played out their fantasy of reconciling the urban middle class with the peasantry. In practice this meant an attempt to harness tourism, both as a market enterprise and a cultural activity, to raise the level of “civilization” of the countryside to that of the cities. Wealth and attention would follow the metropolitans as they booked cheap rooms in the back of beyond. Harsányi’s words in the *Traveler’s Book* set the tone when he looked ahead to the day when the villagers, flush with urban vacationers’ money, would stir from their traditional “motionlessness” and visit the big city. There, he reasoned, they would find the secret to successful hospitality: “It would come to them that civilized needs can only be satisfied by civilized households. The village houses will become prettier, generous sunlight will beam in through the more widely opened windows, and the iron taps of the brand-new plumbing lines will sparkle.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Tihamér Fabinyi, “Az ‘Utas Könyve’ olvasóihoz,” in *Az utas könyve: Magyar utazási kézikönyve és utmutató*, ed. Károly Kaffka and Károly Széchenyi (Budapest: Országos Magyar Weekend Egyesület, 1935), 43.

<sup>23</sup> Harsányi, “Előszó.”

## 4.2 BETTER LIVING THROUGH TOURISM; OR, THE SOCIAL MISSION OF PAID HOSPITALITY

The publication of *The Traveler's Book* in early 1935 was, as we have seen, the beginning of an organizational transformation within OMWE. No longer would its efforts focus mainly on finding ways of sending lower-middle-class urban Hungarians out for quick jaunts to the countryside. Now, it would bring them entire summer vacations at an affordable price by recruiting them as carriers of economic and cultural development. In this, OMWE activists intended to make their association the standard-bearer of a new “movement” gaining momentum within the tourism industry – known interchangeably as the “paying guest” (*fizető vendég*), “paid hospitality” (*fizető vendéglátás*), or “village hospitality”/“village tourism” (*falusi vendéglátás*). What this meant, in essence, was that rather than seek vacations abroad or at expressly commercial venues (resorts, hotels, etc.), urbanites would receive room and board from a family in the countryside in exchange for cash.

Hungarian tourism promoters understood the phenomenon (as they did with so many other habits of tourist culture) to have originated long before in England.<sup>24</sup> But for OMWE leadership, the model – and closest competition – came from Austria, where guesthouses comprised a very well-established branch of tourism infrastructure.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, the Austrian tourism industry leaned so heavily on private householders to make up for the lack of capital available for hotels that, by 1933, they accounted for a remarkable 39 percent of tourist beds in

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<sup>24</sup> Kálmán Hardy, “Paying Guests,” *Magyar Szemle* 20, no. 1 (1934): 54.

<sup>25</sup> “Széchenyi Károly gróf országos elnök programbeszéde,” in PML X.221 (Országos Magyar Weekend Egyesület Pest megyei csoportja iratai), 1.

the country.<sup>26</sup> And whereas OMWE activists saw themselves as pioneers in coordinating and multiplying the few and casually-run Hungarian guesthouses, the Austrian venues were well integrated into the comparatively robust system of governmental oversight, having been subject to state and federal regulation for some years.<sup>27</sup>

Where OMWE and like-minded organizations apparently departed from the Austrian example, however, was in viewing paid hospitality as a vehicle for what would later be called “development tourism.” In today’s terms, this refers to a form of “alternative tourism” that attempts to mitigate, if not entirely avoid, the exploitative, consumerist nature of travel to poorer regions of the globe. Often organized by non-governmental organizations rather than frankly commercial ventures, development tourism junkets – in theory – represent a mutually beneficial exchange whereby the visiting rich traveler comes in contact with people of “authentic” traditional cultures, thereby learning about the “true” social condition of the locals and coming away as better, more enlightened people. On the flipside, the “developing” hosts are able to gain from tourism by collecting some of the revenue generated by such trips, while being spared the displacement and disruption that typically accompanies commercial tourism development. They also get the chance to share their culture with members of the “developed” world and, with luck, encourage its preservation. Noel B. Salazar makes the point, though, that development tourism is much better at providing the guests with a sense of self-satisfaction than it is in promoting genuine cross-cultural understanding or lasting economic advantages to the host communities.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> The number of hotel beds as a percentage of the total dropped from 52.11 percent in 1926-27 to 45.35 percent in 1932-33. Private homes gained much of the difference. These statistics are cited in: A.J. Norval, *The Tourist Industry: A National and International Survey* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, 1936), 142.

<sup>27</sup> “Fremdenbeherbergung als häusliche Nebenbeschäftigung,” *Der Fremdenverkehr*, April 1936: 3-4.

<sup>28</sup> Noel B. Salazar, “Developmental Tourists vs. Development Tourism: A Case Study,” in *Tourist Behaviour: A Psychological Perspective*, ed. Aparna Raj (New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, 2004), 85–107.

Thus while OMWE became the largest countrywide body dedicated to the promotion and regulation of paid hospitality in Hungary, neither the concept nor its paternalist tenor was its peculiar innovation. Even before *The Traveler's Book* hit shelves, the diplomat and former Royal and Imperial naval officer Kálmán Hardy, writing in the influential high-culture journal of current affairs *Hungarian Review* (*Magyar Szemle*), outlined the wholesome effects that the rise of the “paying guest” movement portended for Hungarian society at large. In the first place, he judged it to have the power to cohere groups that normally would hardly ever interact. “Today, when we have so much cause to fear further fragmentation among the strata of national society, we can view something mission-like in the amiability with which our provincial mansions indiscriminately take as guests – even if for money – down-on-their-heels counts, financial aristocrats, and intellectuals; gentry forced to live in the city and workers, merchants, burghers, and soldiers wishing for the village.”<sup>29</sup> Second, Hardy declared that, in addition to aiding “social assimilation,” the spread of the paying guest system would help fuse the peasantry with the metropolitans, whose urban mores had distanced them severely from the truly communal, truly Hungarian lifestyle of the villages. The more time urbanites spent observing the peasants firsthand, the more they would come to “feel themselves in solidarity” with their “problems, complaints, and desires.” It would drive them to feel the way that “impatient grown-ups” do when watching a baby learn to walk. “[The child] would like to be independent, to come to his feet, but it isn’t possible. It is only possible to somehow embolden [the child], but not to stand him up. That is the feeling of impotence that the city person, with all the good fortune of his station, gets when face-to-face with the villager living in such backwardness, so far away from culture, hospitals, and good transportation.” Actually witnessing the struggles of his agrarian

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<sup>29</sup> Kálmán Hardy, “Paying Guests,” *Magyar Szemle* 20, no. 1 (1934): 54.

kinsmen would shake the urban Hungarian from taking his environment to be anything more than an illusory “Potemkin village” and inspire him to realize that action was necessary to alleviate the rough situation of the peasants.<sup>30</sup>

The OMWE system of paid hospitality aimed to go into realms of action well beyond those suggested in Hardy’s reflections. Not only would it connect paying guests with rural hosts; it would use paying guests as the means of delivering the countryside from the “backwardness” that Hardy and many other sympathetic observers recognized as a plague on agrarian life. In adopting this mission, OMWE leaders initiated significant changes in 1935 and 1936 that transfigured the organization’s structure as well as its façade. The first of these was the formation of “community development committees” (*község fejlődési bizottságok*)<sup>31</sup> in every locality affiliated with it. The second was the “rebranding” of OMWE as the National Hungarian Hospitality Association (Országos Magyar Vendégforgalmi Szövetség), or OMVESZ, in early 1936. The former innovation shall be discussed in detail below. The latter was intended to demonstrate the organization’s commitment to a form of tourism that was not as nakedly profit-driven as the usual term *idegenforgalom* supposedly implied. “Hospitality” described a relationship between hosts and guests, not sellers and buyers. It concealed the inherently commercial nature of the exchange, or at least recast it as something more noble than a business transaction. True, rural hosts would receive money, but every pengő of the proceeds would represent a stepping-stone out of backwardness.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>31</sup> The word *község* can be translated into English simply as “village.” But as a legal term it encompasses a number of English analogues: commune (cf. German *Gemeinde*), municipality, township, and civil parish, all of which denote a legally-defined community with a certain level of self-governance. I have chosen to translate the word as “community” when referring to its use in OMWE/OMVESZ documents, for two reasons. First, “community” is broad enough to speak to the aforementioned English analogues without implying any substantive legal equivalence to any of them. Second, it connotes common belonging and even collective “oneness,” which, with its *község fejlődési bizottságok*, is something OMVESZ claimed to promote between town and country. I believe, therefore, that using “community” is an appropriate way to convey the intended spirit of the organization’s enterprise.



#### 4.3 (TRAVEL) AGENTS OF CIVILIZATION: THE AIMS, ETHOS, AND ACTIVITIES OF THE OMVESZ COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES

The community development committees central to OMWE/OMVESZ's newfound mission had two basic charges. The first was, as the saying goes, to put heads in beds. Members of the vacationing public interested in staying at an OMVESZ-sponsored guesthouse could seek information at the central office in Budapest or at any of the county/regional offices. Using the *Traveler's Book* as their cardinal index, the agents there would compile a list of suggested localities based on a traveler's desires and personal particulars, including marital status and "material situation." Then the agent would instruct the potential client to send letters of interest to the community development committees of as many candidate locations as possible, providing (for a small fee) him/her with special stationary pre-marked with OMVESZ logos and information forms. Thereafter it was the responsibility of the local development committee to put the guest in touch with the selected host to arrange the details of scheduling, options for board, and payment.<sup>32</sup>

The development committees' second, grander function was encapsulated by their name: to help inhabitants of "vacation-ready" (*nyaralásra alkalmas*) localities modernize their villages and homes.<sup>33</sup> Thus the committees served, in essence, as the forward outposts of the village tourism movement's civilizing mission. They were to seek out ways of making each village as a

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<sup>32</sup> This summary is based on instructions given to OMVESZ agents ca. 1936. "Utmutatás a nyaralás iránt érdeklődők felvilágosítására," in PML X.221 (Országos Magyar Weekend Egyesület Pest megyei csoportja iratai). The process was also explained to the public in the OMVESZ newspaper. See: "Hogyan válik olcsóvá a nyaralás?" *Vendégforgalmi Újság*, April 1, 1937: 2.

<sup>33</sup> According to debates among OMWE officers in late 1935, it appears that at least a few municipalities (e.g. in Heves County) already maintained bodies performing work similar to the community development committees. "Jegyzőkönyv" (November 11, 1935), in MOL K148, 914. csomó, 17 tétel, 6363-935. szám, p. 8.

whole more pleasant and attractive to vacationers, for instance by taking the lead in beautifying public spaces, taming typically dusty streets, installing bathing facilities, and establishing places for socialization and entertainment. This mandate the committees carried into the host homesteads themselves, namely through encouraging the installation of “modern” toilets and bathrooms.<sup>34</sup>

It was also the committees’ job to keep track of the households suitable for paid hospitality and monitor their internal and external conditions. In this respect, the committees presided as judges of what represented a level of “culture” acceptable to urban visitors. They wielded the power to decide which households should appear on the rolls of available venues and to certify this privileged status by issuing special placards. The placards were to be placed somewhere visible to passers-by, indicating to potential guests that the household could be counted on to provide a “quality” experience.

The archival sources consulted here unfortunately do not give any precise indication of the minimum standards the committees deemed necessary to receive a placard. Furthermore, while approximately 3,000 were disseminated countrywide in 1936, the ratio of successful to unsuccessful applicants is unknown.<sup>35</sup> It is clear, however, that the system of (at least theoretical) inspection and control was about more than maintaining commercially desirable standards in an emerging sector of the tourism industry – it was about encouraging and enforcing a certain level of “civilization” in the use and conditions of tourist spaces. Indeed, the highest echelons of OMVESZ leadership did not hesitate to frame it in this way. “We cannot advertise domestic vacationing if at the same time we do not attempt with all conceivable exertion to produce the prerequisites such that whoever goes to the Hungarian countryside to rest will find the possibility

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<sup>34</sup> Széchényi, *Az Országos Magyar Vendégforgalmi Szövetség működésének rövid története*, 16.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 23–24.

of rest appropriate to the standard level of Hungarian cultural demands [*kulturigények*],” intoned OMVESZ president Count Károly Széchényi before an assembly of the association’s county officers in March 1936.<sup>36</sup> On multiple occasions in his speech, Széchényi employed the term “cultural hygiene” (*kultúrhygiénia*), using it to describe, variously, that thing which the villages were lacking and which OMVESZ-sponsored tourism would help cultivate.<sup>37</sup> According to the secretary’s minutes, Széchényi called for “special emphasis... to be placed on the fact that the Community Development Committees are to raise the village populations to a level suitable to carry out paid hospitality, after which it would carry out the denotation of paid-hospitality houses with signage, which have already been ordered and will be distributed to the vice-lords-lieutenant shortly.”<sup>38</sup>

There are signs that, perhaps unsurprisingly, the community development committees’ ambitious agenda encountered practical difficulties. One OMVESZ client, Károly Scharff from Subotica (in Hungarian, Szabadka) in northern Yugoslavia, complained to the association’s house newspaper, *Hospitality News* (*Vendégforgalmi Újság*), that his recent vacation to Bakonybél in Veszprém County had not been the idyll the paper had advertised. While he had enjoyed the “exceptional air” and beautiful scenery, he discovered a few disturbing “anomalies.” First, after inquiring locally why he hadn’t seen OMVESZ placards anywhere in town, he had been informed that the Bakonybél representatives had yet to receive their complement of signs. Second came “something even stranger... Further inquiries at the notary received the reply that

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<sup>36</sup> “Széchényi Károly gróf országos elnök programbeszéde,” in PML X.221 (Országos Magyar Weekend Egyesület Pest megyei csoportja iratai), 1.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. and “Jegyzőkönyv: Felvétel az Országos Magyar Weekend Egyesület osztályigazgatóságainak... 1936. március hó 13.-án d.u. 4 órakor tartott ülésről,” in PML X.221 (Országos Magyar Weekend Egyesület Pest megyei csoportja iratai), 1–2.

<sup>38</sup> “Jegyzőkönyv: Felvétel az Országos Magyar Weekend Egyesület osztályigazgatóságainak... 1936. március hó 13.-án d.u. 4 órakor tartott ülésről,” in PML X.221 (Országos Magyar Weekend Egyesület Pest megyei csoportja iratai), 2.

*Bakonybél is not fit for vacationing* and the daily pension price is 12 pengős. *Well, this isn't propaganda – it's cause for alarm!*" (Emphases in original.) Finally, Scharff clucked at the "scandalous condition" of the village's sidewalks, which, he somehow learned, had been scheduled for improvement since 1912. "I would like to believe that what I experienced was just an egregious case. The entire Hungarian tourism industry would be endangered and teeter on its very foundations, if such a thing were to happen often and in many places."<sup>39</sup> More surprising, however, might be the indications that the OMVESZ push for regulation (at least in its early days) elicited the displeasure of those it was least concerned with targeting. As the OMWE county representative from Veszprém reported in 1935, the monitoring standards established by the community development committees had ruffled the feathers of some landed nobles, who were somehow "alienated" by the fact that the organization "had given [their] paid hospitality activities a professional character."<sup>40</sup>

#### **4.4 KÁRÁSZ: POSTER-TOWN OF PATERNALIST TOURISM PROMOTION**

Károly Széchenyi's characterization of the backwardness of the Hungarian villages as a problem of "cultural hygiene" was a potent turn of phrase. It cast the community development committees in the dual role of urban planner and physician, invested with the moral authority to prescribe certain changes in their villages' spatial arrangements and economic activities. As far as OMVESZ leaders were concerned, this role was more than a snappy rhetorical coincidence. The community development committees were, in design and in practice, meant to be controlled by

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<sup>39</sup> "Vendégeink irják...", *Vendégforgalmi Újság*, October 1937: 7.

<sup>40</sup> "Jegyzőkönyv" (November 11, 1935), in MOL K148 914. csomó, 17. tétel, 6363-935. szám, p. 9.

members of the rural intelligentsia: notaries and magistrates above all, but also teachers, doctors, and clergymen. Such men typified the paternalist “Christian and national” political ideology of the Horthy era; they were the lamp-bearers of civilization in the villages; and they were expected to apply their fatherly hands towards husbanding the success of rural tourism. To illustrate this expectation, OMVESZ held up the tale of how one village, led by its dedicated pastor, met deliverance through paid hospitality.

Interwar Kárász was a tiny settlement of some 500 souls in 1935, situated 21 km north of Pécs (or 150 km southwest of Budapest).<sup>41</sup> It was there in 1931 that parish priest Lajos Kun, seeing that the poorer members of his flock had fallen on hard times, resolved that attracting vacationers from the cities would be the best way of bringing farmers a livable income. His turn toward paid hospitality evidently came without the involvement of outside agents such as OMWE, although he, too, had been inspired by the Austrian example.<sup>42</sup> OMVESZ executive vice president Károly Kaffka exalted Kárász in *Hospitality News* as the paragon of the wonders that village tourism could bring and by what means they could be conjured. Kun did an “apostle’s work,” in Kaffka’s words, before the 1931 summer season. Under his supervision, local and hired laborers built a road from the village to the nearest railway station, installed electric lighting in town, built a new inn, and wired the village with telecommunication lines. In these efforts Kun was enabled by the support of the townsfolk, whom Kaffka praised as “good-natured, respectful, honest, accommodating, and hospitable” – seemingly a recipe for the kind of native village tourism required.<sup>43</sup> For his project in the following year, Kun found that his

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<sup>41</sup> The population numbers come from Kaffka and Széchényi, *Az utas könyve*, 440.

<sup>42</sup> Attiláné Mezei, “Kárász és a falusi nyaraltatás,” in *A falusi turizmus hagyományai*, ed. Dezső Kovács (Budapest: Mezőgazda, 2003), 49.

<sup>43</sup> Károly Kaffka, “Szegény falúból – üdülőhely,” *Vendégforgalmi Újság*, April 1, 1937.: 1.

parishioners' pocketbooks accommodating as well: through the issue of 10-pengő shares he was able to finance the construction of an open-air swimming pool.<sup>44</sup>

Despite the rapid pace of improvement in Kárász, tourist traffic got off to a slow start. A mere nine guests arrived in 1931, a number that the construction of the pool in 1932 helped increase to 70. By 1936, however, the town was attracting 380 visitors per year and bringing in total revenues of over 25,000 pengős. According to Kaffka the little village had dedicated itself wholesale to the tourism industry, and in so doing had pulled itself up from the depths of despair. "In this village there are no back taxes," he reported. "Here it's all smiles and joy, especially if one sees the village's true father... to whom his adoring people submit at a gesture."<sup>45</sup> Leaving aside for the moment the authoritarian undertones of Kaffka's panegyric, the message of his article was clear: this could be *your* village, reader, if you and your village only will it so.

If the rags-to-riches story of Kárász indeed reflects what OMVESZ activists believed to be the prime example of what their mission set out to accomplish, then it offers some lessons in how those activists conceived of the village tourism project as a whole. The first is that leadership would naturally come from the village intelligentsia: the priest, the teacher, the doctor, and the notary. It was these men above all who must be enlisted as disciples in the cause of the "elevated spiritual and economic development" of the communities they served.<sup>46</sup> Their individual relationships with the community varied – Lajos Kun had lived in Kárász for ten years and clearly had gained the trust of his flock before launching his improvement campaign<sup>47</sup> – but they represented a small group distinct from the rest of the villagers.

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<sup>44</sup> Mezei, "Kárász és a falusi nyaraltatás," 50.

<sup>45</sup> Kaffka, "Szegény falúból – üdülőhely."

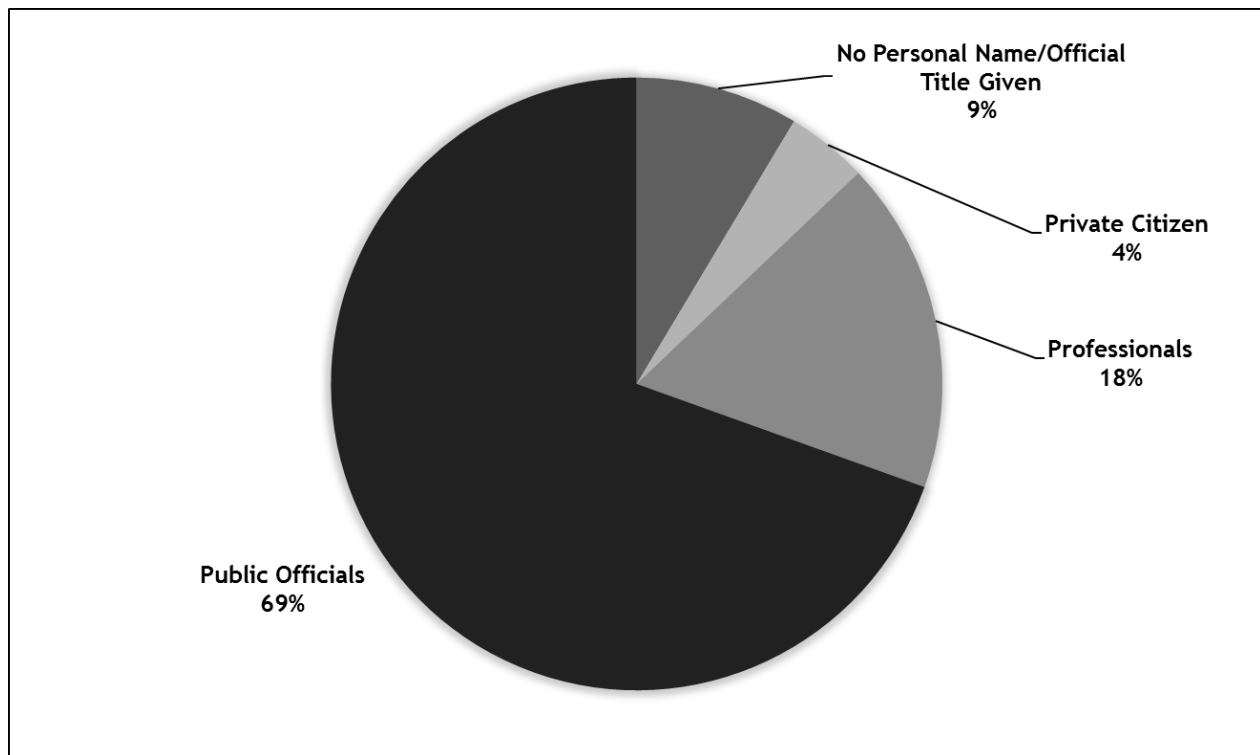
<sup>46</sup> János Pichler, "Tartsanak irányítótanfolyamokat a falu intelligenciája számára," *Vendégforgalmi Újság*, January 1938: 3.

<sup>47</sup> Kaffka, "Szegény falúból – üdülőhely."

The community development committee in each locality was supposed to be composed of members of the village intelligentsia and the farmers (*gazdák*) who had opened their homes to paying guests.<sup>48</sup> The reality, however, seems to have been that the intelligentsia overshadowed the influence of the farmers themselves. Although available OMWE/OMVESZ records do not illuminate the true compositions of the hundreds of development committees, it is possible to distill information from the *Traveler's Book* as proxy data until more complete sources are found. Excluding Budapest, the first edition of the *Traveler's Book* lists 301 “vacation-ready” localities, noting the person or office to which an interested tourist should turn for further information in each case. In most instances the entry specified what was the individual’s occupation or office, though some entries indicated none. Figure 5 below displays a simplified categorization of these 301 entries.

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<sup>48</sup> “A jó nyaralás biztosítója: A községfejlesztő bizottság szerepe,” *Vendégforgalmi Újság*, March 15, 1937: 2.

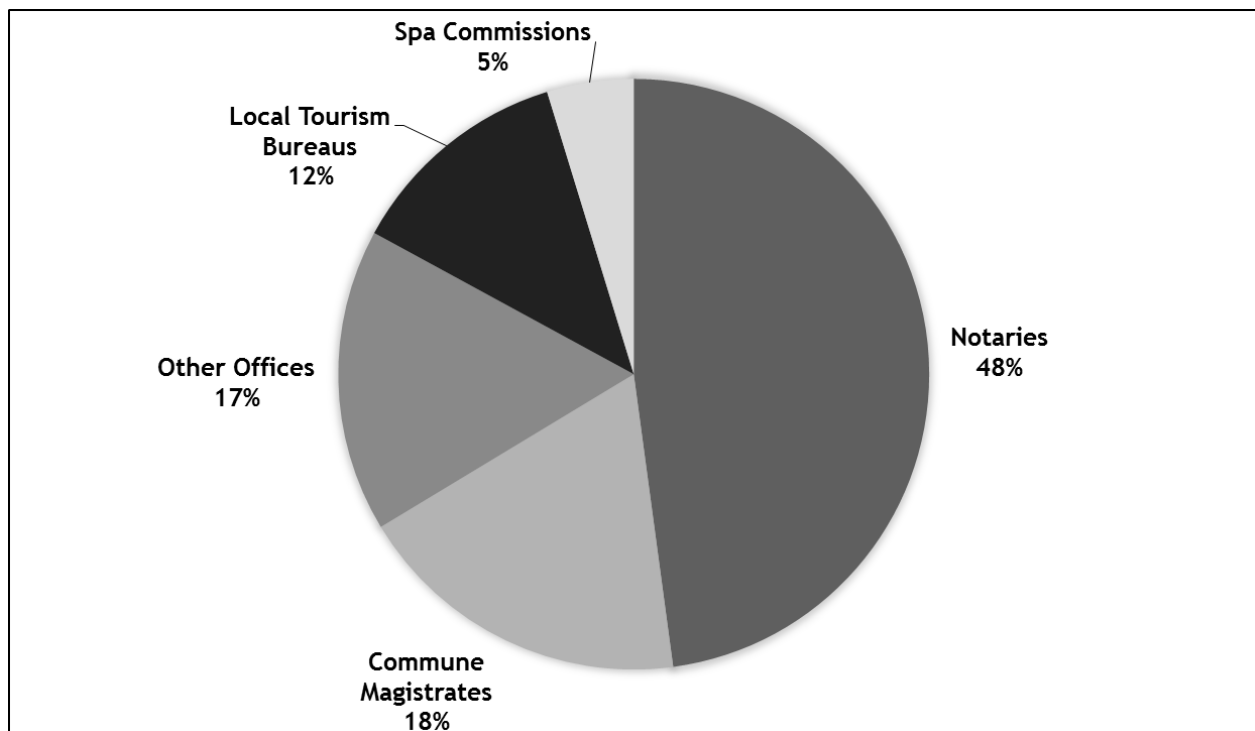


**Figure 5. OMVESZ representatives listed in *Traveler's Book*, by general category (total = 301)**

Taking these data on representatives as proxies for the make-up of the community development committees is not without its problems. No source defines the precise organizational relationship between the function of the representative and the activities of the committee, nor is it safe to assume that representatives named in the *Traveler's Book* necessarily served on their local committee. Nonetheless, the move has merit on contextual grounds. Even if OMWE/OMVESZ representatives did not sit on community development committees, they still reflected the *kind* of person (societally speaking) that was interested in the organization's work, and the kind of person that the organization turned to for assistance. Furthermore, as explained above, the process by which potential paying guests applied for lodging was in the hands of the local development committee. For both the prospective guest and the responsible OMVESZ



agent, the *Traveler's Book* was the official master list of contacts in the organization's network, and the person to whom applications for host-guest matchups would be addressed. If we take into account that most of the communities listed in the *Traveler's Book* comprised only a few thousand inhabitants (or less), then it seems reasonable to imagine that the official representatives were likely to have been involved in the work of the local committee.



**Figure 6. Breakdown by office type of OMVESZ representatives categorized above (Fig. 5) as public officials (subtotal = 211)**

Bearing these caveats in mind, summary analysis of the *Traveler's Book* data shows that OMWE was indeed reliant on the traditional agents of “civilization” in the countryside. Figure 6 above breaks down the subcategorization of OMWE representatives holding some form of public office. In 48 percent of cases, the role was filled by notaries (*jégyző*) and magistrates (*szolgabíró*). Both offices were fundamental elements of the central government and were very

strongly associated with its “civilizing” power. As the keeper of legal and economic records, the notary was for villagers “the nearest, most easily accessible representative of the public administration.”<sup>49</sup> A brief examination of the office, which dates to the 1600s, reveals that the prominence of notaries within the village tourism movement was in fact reflective of their general preeminence in rural society between the wars. Until the early 1870s the notary was the literate, numerate subordinate of the more powerful village mayor. After Act 18 of 1871 made uniform the system of local administration throughout the Kingdom of Hungary, however, the position took on a different character. The level of expertise required to navigate the laws of the land rapidly exceeded the capacity of the mayor and other village-bred officials. The notaries, who had been trained in the schools and colleges of the cities, grew more powerful as their education and practical legal knowledge became ever more exclusive.

For this reason it was highly unlikely that the village notary was anything but an outsider, a member of the urban class charged, in effect, with governing a socially and culturally alien population. He was by law supported financially by the community he administered, but he was not of that population; and though the power he wielded was in truth greater than any of the elected village officers, he retained his position for life.<sup>50</sup> The upshot of the elevation of notaries to such a status, especially after 1920, was that peasants and lower-class villagers were crowded out of representation in local government. As notaries came more and more to be the sole meshing point between local and county government, they enjoyed a virtual monopoly on direct knowledge of the intentions of the lord lieutenant, further undercutting opportunities for anyone

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<sup>49</sup> Fél and Hofer, *Proper Peasants*, 324–325.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 325. See also the text of Law 18 of 1871 itself: “1871. évi XVIII. Törvénycikk,” *1000 év Törvényei*, accessed October 16, 2014, <http://www.1000ev.hu/index.php?a=3&param=5484>.

else to gain influence in village politics.<sup>51</sup> The presence of so many of these figures within the paid hospitality movement, therefore, would seem to confirm the top-down, even authoritarian, image presented in the parable of Kárász as the model “vacation-ready community.” This, along with the fact that in 1936 the Ministry of the Interior “recognized” the work of the community development committees, blurred the line that was supposed to mark OMWE/OMVESZ as a non-governmental organization.<sup>52</sup>

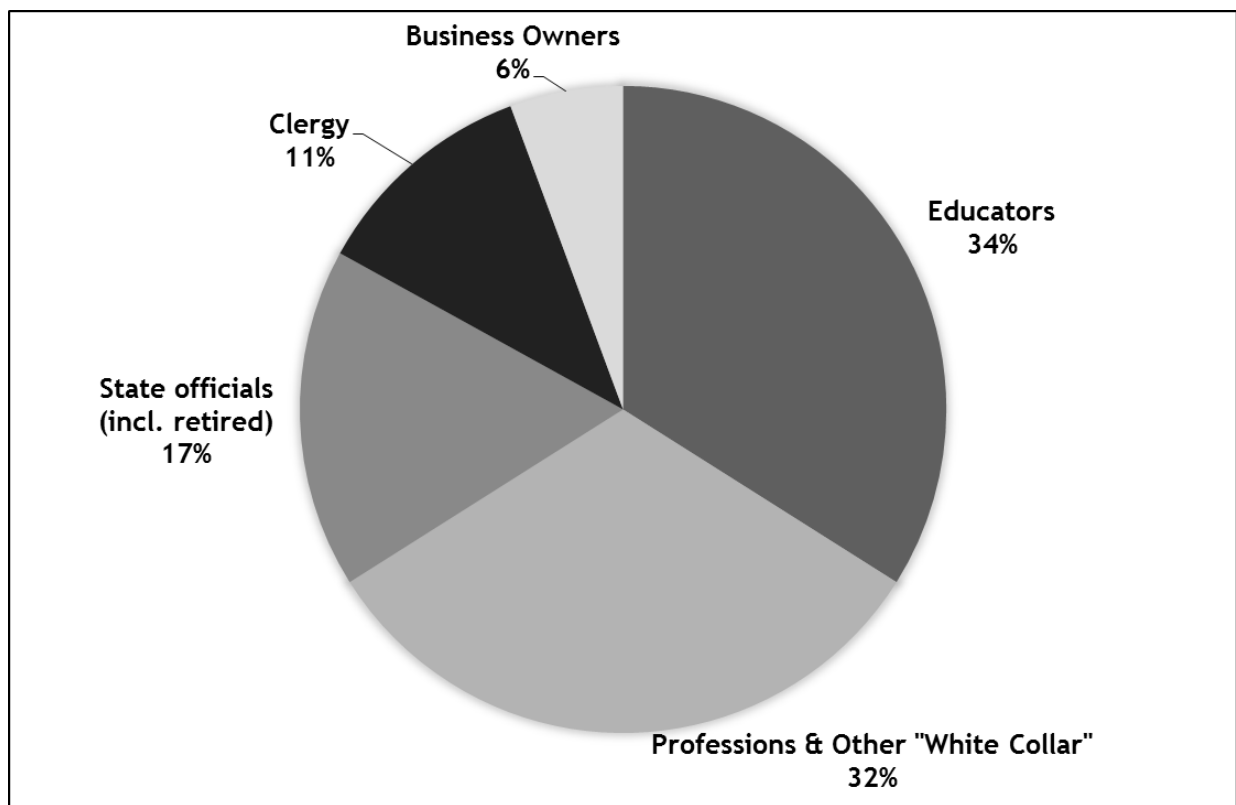
In an equivalent cultural capacity, the professionals that comprised 17.6 percent of the remainder (Figure 7 below) also occupied privileged positions in rural communities. In particular, teachers, priests, and doctors joined notaries and magistrates as being among those that rural reformers – and OMWE itself – charged most especially with the task of bringing “culture” to the peasantry.<sup>53</sup> The 36 instances in which local tourism bureaus and spa commissions were named as representatives are connected to locations that were urban or otherwise directly commercially connected to the tourism industry (i.e. baths and resort facilities).

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<sup>51</sup> Péter Gunst, *A paraszti társadalom magyarországon a két világháború között* (Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézet, 1987), 139–140.

<sup>52</sup> “Jegyzőkönyv: Felvétel az Országos Magyar Weekend Egyesület osztályigazgatóságainak... 1936. március hó 13.-án d.u. 4 órakor tartott ülésről,” in PML X.221 (Országos Magyar Weekend Egyesület Pest megyei csoportja iratai), 1.

<sup>53</sup> For instance, this idea was expressed openly on a number of occasions in the newspaper of OMWE’s “rebranded” incarnation, the Országos Magyar Vendégforgalmi Szövetsége. E.g.: “A jó nyaralás biztosító / A községfejlesztő bizottság szerepe,” *Vendégforgalmi Újság*, March 15, 1937: 2; János Pichler, “Tartsanak irányítótanfolyamokat a falu intelligenciája számára,” *Vendégforgalmi Újság*, January, 1938: 3.



**Figure 7. Breakdown by occupational category of OMVESZ representatives categorized above (Fig. 5) as professionals (subtotal = 53)**

In *no case*, however, was a representative named as a farmer (*gazda*), let alone identifiable as a peasant smallholder. It is possible that some of the representatives categorized here as professionals or private citizens were indeed landowners, and perhaps even self-identified as farmers. But notaries and magistrates were supported by a dwelling and salary provided by the community they served and therefore were likely to be little more than gardeners, not producers for subsistence or profit.<sup>54</sup> Thus, with “civilizers” claiming (at minimum) slightly over 60 percent of the total OMWE representation, it can be argued that the initiative for spreading the gospel of paid hospitality in Hungary indeed came from the upper

<sup>54</sup> Fél and Hofer, *Proper Peasants*, 325.

echelons of village society, whose origins and positions of authority likely inclined them towards viewing the cultivation of the tourism industry to be a fitting expression of their paternal mandates.

Another lesson from Kárász is that the infrastructural improvements Lajos Kun orchestrated in the village, particularly the construction of recreational facilities and beautification efforts, indicate the elements of “civilization” that OMVESZ was eager to cultivate. Here, too, the state became involved. Cognizant of the difficulties that local tourism activists faced when attempting to raise capital for such ventures, in 1936 the central leadership appealed to the Finance Ministry for funding. The initial grant was set at 100,000 pengős, to be distributed by the main office in Budapest in 2,000-pengő tranches to 50 communities across the country.<sup>55</sup> Even before any aid materialized, OMVESZ members debated how it would be best allocated. The general consensus seems to have been that the money should go to communities that had already demonstrated initiative in organizing village tourism independent of outside support. Ultimately, however, the hoped-for support from the government did not amount to even one quarter of the level initially proposed. The Ministry of Finance allocated OMWE only 15,000 pengős for tourism-related improvements, 14,000 of which the organization’s central office disbursed evenly to seven communities and 1,000 it kept to use on advertising. Kárász, it should be noted, was one of these seven.<sup>56</sup>

Although submitted by villages that did not receive subventions, the OMWE records at the Pest County Archive contain applications for funding that illuminate the kinds of projects it might have wanted to support, had there been the means. The language of the applications also

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<sup>55</sup> Széchenyi, *Az Országos Magyar Vendéforgalmi Szövetség működésének rövid története*, 25.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. Three of these communities are located in the Transdanubian west of the country (Városlőd, west of Veszprém; Őrszentpéter, on the Serbian border; and Kárász, north of Pécs); two are on the Slovakian border (Dunaalmás and Perőcsény); and two are in the northeast quadrant, east of Miskolc (Újhuta and Tokaj).

reveal something of how local actors interpreted and responded to OMWE's civilizing mission – betraying, in particular, the rather dismal outlook of the local intelligentsia. The notary of Csobánka, a township located just 15 km northwest of the capital in the Pilis Hills, sent OMWE a request for money to aid in the construction of a public recreation pavilion. He presented Csobánka's case in desperate, even self-loathing terms, painting a grim picture of the township's ability to attract tourists.

The urban population happily seeks out our villages, even though there is little to no culture to be found there. The village's [*sic*] attracting strength is the clean, excellent air, the inexpensiveness, the simplicity, the wide courtyards, [the] many trees, etc. The not-exactly-hygienically, primitively outfitted houses and all that is rural are sufficient for all of these things, but only for a short time, because eventually one has enough of the silence, the boredom takes its fatal toll, and one begins to long for company and entertainment.

What would really help Csobánka, the notary continued, was an outdoor swimming pool, but that would have to wait until enough vacationers came to justify the investment. In the meantime, he argued, the creation of a space for common sociability was “indispensable.” It was with such a goal in mind that he applied for building materials, a public toilet, a lamppost with a clock, eight sets of tables and chairs, and a radio.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> “A hazai nyaralás elősegítése céljából: Csobánka községben nyaraló közönség részére létesítendő kulturális intézmény költségvetése 1936 évre,” in PML X.221 (Országos Magyar Weekend Egyesület Pest megyei csoportja iratai).

The notary from Pilisszentkereszt, tucked away even farther from Budapest in the Pilis Hills, dressed his application not in a ragged tale of woe, but rather in a prophecy of unrealized potential. In a markedly deferential tone and echoing OMWE's customary rhetoric, the notary proclaimed that "ever since a magnificent new motorway leading to Dobogókő [a resort area] appeared on the edge of town, courtesy of the exalted government, it has been flat-out predestined to our little community that less-demanding vacationers living in more modest conditions would be able to rest and relax here." He argued that it was not for want of effort or desire that Pilisszentkereszt had not yet achieved more, but rather because it was so poor. A 2,000-pengő grant would be just the thing to make improvements capable of further "endearing" vacationers to the township. His first (and most expensive) concern was that visitors to Pilisszentkereszt would find the place pleasing to the eye. To this end he called for beautification through the planting of trees and flowers in public spaces. Like the notary from Csobánka, this one, too, wrote of a "burning need" for bathing facilities in his township, but appeared willing to settle for the installation of two heated bathtub/shower units in a local hotel. Other requests included ten toilets, which would be installed in "suitable" private houses in the village, and 20 deck chairs, which would be rented out to vacationers for a fee.<sup>58</sup>

Notably, these proposed improvements – including those in another application from nearby Nagykovácsi, which asked for 1,530 pengős towards dust control on the village's thoroughfares<sup>59</sup> – did not seek to upgrade the living conditions of potential host families. With the exception of the ten toilets requested for Pilisszentkereszt, all of the appeals were directed toward making their respective locations more attractive, indeed more tolerable, to urban

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<sup>58</sup> "Pilisszentkereszt község 'Községfejlesztő Bizottság' alap költségvetése az 1936 évre," in PML X.221 (Országos Magyar Weekend Egyesület Pest megyei csoportja iratai).

<sup>59</sup> "Költségvetés. Nagykovácsi község idegen forgalmának biztosításához szükséges munkalatokról és azok értékekről," in PML X.221 (Országos Magyar Weekend Egyesület Pest megyei csoportja iratai).

visitors. Overall economic circumstances were such that any household interested in getting involved with “paid hospitality” would have to rely on its own resources. But where they could not provide material support, the proponents of village tourism were keen to offer thoroughgoing advice on how peasant hosts could “elevate” themselves to the standard of city visitors.

The activities – indeed existence of – the community development committees open a window to understanding the multidimensional ambitions embraced by village tourism promoters. It might be asked whom, exactly, it was they sought to help. Was it the (domestic) tourism industry, as an untapped sector of a struggling national economy? Was it the agriculturalists, hit hardest by the global depression, who, with minimal capital investment, could diversify their income by selling their hospitality? Or was it the urban petty bourgeoisie, whose members could not afford the vacations they deserved – and who could not, therefore, do their part in creating a viable Hungarian tourism industry? In purely economic terms, it was all three. From that standpoint the community development committees functioned as nonprofit commercial operations. They helped unincorporated small-business owners find customers, regulated service quality, encouraged investment in tourism, and provided advice on how to make homes and villages more competitive in the tourism market.

But OMVESZ leaders rarely spoke the rhetoric of business. Their language was that of the missionary, the educator, and the nationalist. They understood their motives for desiring to modernize the countryside to be altruistic ones. They seem to have been thoroughly convinced that the “community development” they advocated would bring only positive results; they seem to have believed, indeed, that their version of development was the one that peasants objectively needed. The question of whether peasants *wanted* development in that particular form never surfaced in their records or publications, presumably because OMVESZ activists took it for



granted that the reforms they proposed reflected an indisputable good. Cultivating the tourist industry in the countryside would be making the countryside better. No distinction existed between the two outcomes.

Yet these motives inevitably depended on a complicated relationship with capitalism and commercialization. In order to convince city folk to spend their money and their summers in obscure villages, tourism promoters needed to see to it that the “product” was one that urbanites wanted to buy. Here lay something of a paradox. Tourists were supposed to bring civilization to the countryside, but without a modicum of pre-existing civilization to attract them, they could not themselves be brought. Thus the apostles of paid hospitality found it necessary to help the peasants do at least a little bit of self-civilizing in preparation for their guests. As a consequence, the parameters of the “civilization” that tourism would spread to the provinces were, from the very start, closely aligned with the tastes and habits of the urban middle class.

#### **4.5      COMMERCIALIZING, REARRANGING, AND SANITIZING THE PEASANT HOMESTEAD**

In 1934, both OMWE and a likeminded organization, the Balatoni Intéző Bizottság (Balaton Management Committee; hereafter BIB), printed handbooks giving advice to peasants on how – and why – to become successful guesthouse operators. OMWE’s book was *The Necessaries of Paid Hospitality*, for which Mrs. Tibor Irsai Szabó was credited as the author. Ernő Miklós Sági was credited for the BIB volume, *The Craft of Village Hospitality (A falusi vendéglátás mestersége)*. According to another source, OMWE distributed 10,000 copies of Szabó’s

pamphlet to farmers throughout Hungary in the year of its publication.<sup>60</sup> Distribution numbers for Sági's manual are not readily available.

Despite being of substantially different lengths (Sági's book was at least three times as long and proportionally more detailed) and bearing different authorship, the two handbooks are, in fact, quite similar. They frequently overlap in both themes and content, and in some locations they even share precisely the same text. This is very likely due to the fact that both of them were "revised" (*átdolgozott*) by the same man, Dr. Géza Orel, who was an expert in pedagogy and business education. Thus, in addition to having the same objectives, the books were joined by a common editorial link. It seems reasonable, therefore, to discuss them together.<sup>61</sup>

An examination of these how-to materials on paid hospitality reveals that village tourism's civilizing process comprised three concurrent sub-processes. In the first place, peasants would have to be persuaded to commercialize their traditional sense of hospitality and come to see guests (and space for guests) as potential sources of money. Second, because hospitality, in the case of paying guests, would no longer be a matter of social obligation or family honor but rather a market transaction, the use of space in the peasant home consequently became subject to the imagined demands of would-be customers. The how-to manuals assumed that the typical peasant home would not be arranged or decorated in a fashion attractive to urban visitors, and therefore would have to be altered accordingly. Third, and perhaps most "civilizing" of all, the marketable peasant guesthouse not only had to be rearranged correctly: it had to be clean. This was the surest sign of modern culture and in theory was as much for the overall benefit of the hosts as it was for the specific benefit of the guests. More than just directing

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<sup>60</sup> Széchenyi, *Az Országos Magyar Vendégforgalmi Szövetség működésének rövid története*, 12.

<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, there is a hint that OMVESZ and the BIB had, at some point, come to an agreement on which group could claim what "turf" – namely that OMVESZ would leave the area around Lake Balaton to the BIB and operate in the rest of the country. See: *Ibid.*

peasants on how to be proper participants in the tourism industry, these guides strove to educate them on how to be “modern” homemakers in the image of their urban visitors.<sup>62</sup>

One of the more influential stereotypes operating in the interwar discourse on national identity maintained that Hungarians were an especially hospitable people, ever-prepared to go to absurd lengths to make a guest feel welcome.<sup>63</sup> This applied even more specifically to rural Hungarians: the proverbially profligate country gentleman would happily outdo himself in the name of entertaining his guest and even the hard-up peasant would unclench his tight fist and ply any visitor with pork and *pálinka*. Such a stereotype, predictably, was wonderfully useful for the tourism industry when advertising abroad, but village tourism promoters did not hesitate to deploy it closer to home when attempting to convert peasants into part-time hoteliers.

In his appeal to the farmers of the Balaton region, Ernő Miklós Sági reminded his readers that Hungarian hospitality was not only world-famous, but that it was also a Christian obligation and a proud national tradition. “Just think: if an unfamiliar wanderer shows up before his cellar, the Hungarian farmer [*gazda*] calls him inside and good-heartedly offers him a glass of wine. He cordially gives the stranger lodging for the night and it never for a moment enters his mind to ask money for this.” But, added Sági crucially, times are hard and the generous Hungarian farmer isn’t making enough from his produce. A paying guest is an excellent source of extra income, and one need not have any qualms about violating the traditional relationship of guest and host:

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<sup>62</sup> Austrian tourism organizations also offered advice to the operators of rural guesthouses on how better to serve their guests. Although it, too, instructed country folk to make their spaces pleasing to urban types with particular tastes, this advice did not share the patronizing tone or assumptions of agrarian “backwardness” pervasive in the Hungarian literature. “Dienst am Fremden,” *Der Fremdenverkehr*, May 1936: 3.

<sup>63</sup> Of course, observed poet and novelist Mihály Babits, a member of practically any other nationality would say the same of his/her people. Mihály Babits, “A magyar jellemről,” in *Mi a magyar?*, ed. Gyula Szekfű (Budapest: Magyar Szemle Társaság, 1939), 48.

“He doesn’t even want to stay with us for free. He will pay good money for everything: for a dwelling, for sustenance, and for our trouble.”<sup>64</sup>

The insistence on framing this transaction as an acceptable commercial modification of the host-guest exchange, rather than as a straightforward business deal, was an important theme running through the village tourism ethos.<sup>65</sup> OMVESZ agents and supporters took pains to stress that their organization nurtured a special, more meaningful kind of tourism that played to the innate virtues of rural Hungarians. The 1936 name-change from OMWE (emphasizing promotion of the “weekend”) to OMVESZ (emphasizing “hospitality”) was meant to reflect precisely that.<sup>66</sup> When the association retooled its proprietary newspaper in 1937, this slogan appeared on the front page of the first issue in the new style:

*Do the paid hosts wait for tourists?*

*No, but rather for guests.*

*Is tourism, therefore, that which OMVESZ wants to carry out?*

*No, but rather hospitality!*<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ernő Miklós Sági, *A falusi vendéglátás mestersége* (Budapest: A Magyar Királyi Balatoni Intéző Bizottság, 1934), 7–9.

<sup>65</sup> A version of this rhetoric appeared in Austrian tourism literature as well, but evidently without being anchored in national stereotypes. One article in the newspaper of the Lower Austrian state tourism bureau, for instance, mentioned offhand that it was poor form to consider guests as part of an “industry.” “The more we treat the guests as *guests*, the better.” “Sorgenkind Fremdenverkehr,” *Der Fremdenverkehr*, July 1936: 1.

<sup>66</sup> Not all members agreed with the proposed change to *vendégforgalom*. One argued in favor of *fizetővendégforgalom* (paying hospitality) and another for *idgenforgalom* (tourism), but president Count Károly Széchenyi rejected both, saying that the former wouldn’t be “expedient” and the latter was not only “overused,” but indeed signify something “entirely different” from the organization’s “goals and aspirations.” “Jegyzőkönyv,” (November 11, 1935), MOL K148, 914. csomó, 17. tétel, 6363-935. szám, p. 7.

<sup>67</sup> Emphases in the original. *Vendégforgalmi Újság*, March 15, 1937: 1. The original Hungarian reads: “A fizetővendéglátók idegeneket várnak? Nem, hanem vendégeket. Idegenforgalom-e tehát az amit OMVESZ meg akar oldani? Nem, hanem vendégforgalom!”

Promoters' exhortations to convert the "clean room" to a profitable space offer a vivid illustration of how the village tourism system sought to commercialize the traditional. It was common practice among east-central European and Balkan peasants to set aside one part of the house, usually the one nearest the street, as an area of special significance.<sup>68</sup> Its purpose was mainly presentational and symbolic rather than practical. Even if a family lived in otherwise Spartan surroundings, the lady of the house would invest considerable effort and expense to line the walls with decorative prestige objects (such as bowls, textiles, and other handicrafts), maintain an immaculately dressed bed, typically piled high with embroidered pillows, and keep the surfaces in spotless condition. Thus the "clean room" represented the "public" space of the home, and, as such, waited forever prepared to accommodate guests, rare though they were. Village tourism advocates perceived the "clean room's" symbolic function, and consequently the fact that the family typically did not inhabit the space, as a form of disuse.<sup>69</sup> They encouraged peasants to see the "clean room" as a ready-to-hand resource, easily turned into rentable accommodations for paying guests. So suggested the *Necessaries of Paid Hospitality*: "If the farmer rents out to vacationers the so-called clean-room, which isn't used in the summertime anyway, he can secure himself some income from it."<sup>70</sup> Sági's *The Craft of Village Hospitality* proposed that "families fleeing from the stuffy cities" would be willing to pay "good money" at the welcoming sight of a farmer's "clean room."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Gábor Gyáni, György Kövér, and Tibor Valuch, eds., *Social History of Hungary from the Reform Era to the End of the Twentieth Century* (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 2004), 457–62.

<sup>69</sup> In his March 1936 keynote address, OMVESZ president Károly Széchenyi referred to the "houses in every attractively situated Hungarian township [*község*] and village where one or two prettily decorated rooms sit uninhabited during the summer." "Széchenyi Károly gróf országos elnök programbeszéde," in PML X.221 (Országos Magyar Weekend Egyesület Pest megyei csoportja iratai), 1.

<sup>70</sup> Szabó, *A fizető vendéglátás kellékei*, 3.

<sup>71</sup> Sági, *A falusi vendéglátás mestersége*, 10–11.

It wasn't enough, however, for the peasant householder to be successful as paid host simply by asking for money for things that he used to bestow free of charge. In a traditional hospitality relationship, individual generosity and rules of etiquette once governed what the guest could expect to receive from the host. Now, however, the commercial nature of the paid hospitality relationship transfigured those expectations to fit a new supply-demand relationship between service provider and consumer. The home itself, or more precisely the experience of staying there, became a peculiar kind of commodity and its sale therefore subject to customer satisfaction. Almost certainly, then, this required that peasant hosts shape their "product" to meet demand. Indeed, village tourism promoters assumed that peasants would have to make substantial alterations to their homes in order to attract and retain customers: the how-to manuals they published were, at base, catalogs of what alterations would be desirable and how the host could make them.

The manuals were thorough on the subject of how to "correctly" furnish a guestroom in a way that would, ostensibly, please an urban visitor. According to both Szabó and Sági, spaces rented out to guests were to be amply stocked with furniture, but not overcrowded. The items in the room should be of good quality, and any "ramshackle" pieces should be removed. Both authors also stressed that guestrooms and their contents should be given over entirely to "serve the comfort of the guest" and therefore stay off-limits to the use and the presence of the host family, even for purposes of storage.<sup>72</sup> "The paying guest doesn't want a musty furniture warehouse, but rather a bright, airy, roomy living space," Sági advised.<sup>73</sup> Presuming, perhaps,

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 12. "It isn't pleasant," Szabó warned, "if the people of the house reserve one of two cabinets to themselves, reasoning that one is enough for their guest," keep all kinds of household articles in it, and then "barge in" for them, when "the greatest quiet" is what the guest wants most. "Where's the tact in that?" Szabó, *A fizető vendéglátás kellékei*, 5.

<sup>73</sup> Sági, *A falusi vendéglátás mestersége*, 12.

that a farmer would need guidance in such matters, the manuals described precisely what kind of tables, dressers, beds, divans, etc. that should go in the room, as well as their optimal placements relative to one another. Szabó even thought it prudent to suggest that a water cup appear on the nightstand.<sup>74</sup>

Even more emphatic were the manuals' prescriptions that guestroom décor adhere to a strictly national style using only dignified "Hungarian" objects. The *Necessaries* stipulated "Hungarian textiles" for linens and drapes and "charming, Hungarian-style [*magyaros*], simple decorative items." Moreover, any new item was to come only from a Hungarian manufacturer: it would have been "a mark of shame" to serve guests using Czech crockery when "hundreds of thousands of our Hungarian worker-brothers starve from unemployment."<sup>75</sup> For its part, *The Craft of Village Hospitality* declared that city guests would be much more interested in a collection of folk art objects – e.g. a chest painted with tulip motifs, wooden plates, "Hungarian" tablecloths, pillowcases with traditional patterns – than in an array of "shabby, market-bought" kitsch "thrown together according to foreign tastes" and "all different kinds of knick-knacks acquired at bazaars."<sup>76</sup>

These pronouncements against decorating rural guesthouses with inexpensive, foreign-made consumer goods not only speak to obvious sentiments of economic nationalism; they also expose an innate tension within village tourism's civilizing ethos. On one hand, cultivation of the rural mystique was *sine qua non* for the allure of village tourism: the whole point of the enterprise lay in a belief that the countryside was fundamentally more virtuous, more truly "national" than the city. On the other hand, peasants were expected to adapt to certain bourgeois

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<sup>74</sup> Szabó, *A fizető vendéglátás kellékei*, 5–6; Sági, *A falusi vendéglátás mestersége*, 11–13.

<sup>75</sup> Szabó, *A fizető vendéglátás kellékei*, 5–7, 13.

<sup>76</sup> Sági, *A falusi vendéglátás mestersége*, 11.

standards and assimilate still others into their own way of life. Yet it seems there was a danger they could become *too* civilized and lose their connection to the rural mystique; that is, they should be civilized enough to entertain their guests in comfort, yet not so much that they were degraded by urban consumer society and all its works. Additionally, taking Sági's business advice at face value, one suspects that urban visitors themselves needed their experience to be sufficiently (but palatably) countrified if it was to qualify as an "authentic" rural experience. Staying in a poor peasant's home, with its "clean room" and all its folk adornments, was a vacation; staying in a poor person's home when industrial products like "crummy, tacky printed pictures" lined the walls was something else entirely.<sup>77</sup>

Finally, the most persistent of the how-to guides' demands was that the peasant host maintain a clean and hygienic living environment. This exhortation rested on two assumptions: first, that peasant conditions were by default unsanitary; second, that urban guests would find them intolerable unless raised to meet certain minimum standards. Indeed, to a remarkable degree, Szabó's and Sági's handbooks could be read as public health propaganda presented in the wrapper of tourism promotion. The advice they gave was intended to improve the health of each host family by encouraging more hygienic practices for their own sake. The chief encouragement, however, was undoubtedly the fact that a cleaner home would attract more paying guests. By following advice on keeping his house sanitary and neat, he would find that it

will be much easier to be able to market his residence and produce, because there's no doubt that a vacationer much prefers to go to stay with a clean farmer who meets basic hygienic requirements than with one from whom he won't receive even the most

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.



elemental sanitary conditions. It is especially important to put an emphasis on these references to hygiene, because they are the considerations by which villages in other countries entice vacationers to themselves.<sup>78</sup>

Conversely, the handbooks warned that a lodger would shun any home where they found the level of cleanliness to be unsatisfactory. “We can’t expect the guest to pay to dwell in a filthy, uncared-for room,” Szabó warned. “A tidy person will flee from such a place.”<sup>79</sup> In this way, the exemplary demands of city visitors backed by the sheer self-interest of market dynamics would have a civilizing effect on the customarily squalid habits of the peasant class. Here, too, village tourism promoters urged hosts to view their tasks as a commercialized extension of traditional practices. “If the Hungarian farmer expects to host friends or relatives, he plasters, whitewashes, and completes a grand cleaning of his house, inside and out, so that his visitor isn’t scandalized. It’s a smart thing, therefore, that we likewise receive the paying guest into an orderly home.”<sup>80</sup>

Orderliness meant the absence of both visible dirt and invisible health-hazards – not only when it came to the farmer’s homestead itself, but for the people who inhabited it as well. Whitewashed walls were a minimum requirement. “Lime disinfects, that is to say it kills the tiny, disease-causing germs, invisible to the naked eye. A whitewashed room is prettier and healthier, and is easier to keep clean. Dust and grime can be seen more readily on a white wall, therefore we can see immediately where we need to dust and clean.”<sup>81</sup> Next came vigilance for the condition of the toilet, which in most cases was a simple outhouse (although Sági provided fairly

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<sup>78</sup> Szabó, *A fizető vendéglátás kellékei*, 4.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>80</sup> Sági, *A falusi vendéglátás mestersége*, 10.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

detailed instructions on how to install a semi-plumbed flushing latrine).<sup>82</sup> Szabó stressed that the spot be clean, well ventilated, and in (relatively) attractive shape, since “unfortunately there are such places where the guest will be afraid to go.” And one should not forget to install a reliable latch, lest the chickens get inside and soil the floor.<sup>83</sup> The how-to manuals also gave a notable quantity of attention to the state of the water supply, apparently worried that farmers were ignorantly poisoning their own wells through unsafe habits or sheer neglect.<sup>84</sup> Not least of all, the appearance of the host and his family had to reflect their dedication to overall neatness. “One can’t say enough about cleanliness. But not just the cleanliness of the room, our room too – and *we* ourselves, so everybody in the house must be clean – proper [*rendes*], as a Hungarian would say. Folks aren’t going to want to stay in a room with ragged, tangle-headed, muddy-shoed personnel or children around.”<sup>85</sup>

Organic smells, manure, and the presence of animals, whether livestock or vermin, featured as areas of special concern. It is hard not to find a hint of irony, even absurdity, in these anxieties. If peasants were not to become too modern in their habits of consumption, they were also not supposed to let the earthiness of their surroundings or their basic livelihoods intrude *too far* into the rural tourism experience. The *Necessaries of Paid Hospitality* urged its readers to anticipate the limits of an urban visitor’s tolerance for country living. Airing out the guestroom every day was a simple but crucial step to take. “The city person is looking for good, fresh village air, not sweaty, bad-smelling air,” which a musty room could not provide. Keeping up a breeze would dry out the floorboards and eliminate the odor of the dirt underneath – something

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 21–23.

<sup>83</sup> Szabó, *A fizető vendéglátás kellékei*, 8.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 13–14; Sági, *A falusi vendéglátás mestersége*, 19–21.

<sup>85</sup> Szabó, *A fizető vendéglátás kellékei*, 8.

an urban guest would find revolting at the first whiff.<sup>86</sup> Although the *Craft of Village Hospitality* admitted that “the farmer’s first concern is farming,” it chided all the same that “it isn’t necessary to keep the hogwash, the trash, the dung fork, or the muddy boots in the doorway, right in front of the guests.”<sup>87</sup> What’s more, farmers had to battle nature itself in order to carve out an environment that would more closely resemble their guests’ customary conditions. Sági insisted that insects and rodents, inevitable members of the agricultural ecosystem were “intolerable to city-folk” and had to be eliminated. He duly offered tips for preventing, trapping, and killing flies, mosquitoes, wasps, mice, and rats – but, interestingly, warned farmers to be on guard against bedbugs, the emphatically urban nuisance that guests might bring with them.<sup>88</sup>

The authors of the how-to manuals certainly assumed that potential hosts most likely did not maintain a bourgeois level of cleanliness or have the comforts of plumbing installed in their homes. Furthermore, they acknowledged that the typical peasant was going to have a difficult time marshaling the financial resources needed for any upgrades to such standards. But they were committed nonetheless to encouraging conformity to those standards, despite the very real hindrances of material want – sometimes by proposing desperate-sounding workarounds. “It is true that we are poor,” Sági affirmed. “However, this is no excuse. The water necessary for cleanliness doesn’t cost money.” He went on to suggest that an enterprising farmer could construct a “home lido” (open-air bathing facility) in his courtyard by placing a washbasin in the center of a ring-shaped privacy barrier made of canvas, reeds, or straw and spreading sand around it. Or, for jury-rigging a shower, Sági recommended attaching a watering can to a wall or post. “The Hungarian is clever,” he declared, and expressed confidence that a farmer could

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 6–7.

<sup>87</sup> Sági, *A falusi vendéglátás mestersége*, 15.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 27–28.

devise an even better solution than these.<sup>89</sup> Szabó's book offered up the identical stopgaps, adding that the Museum of Medicine in Budapest exhibited further examples of inexpensive substitute devices for modern plumbing.<sup>90</sup>

Testimonial letters to the editor printed in *Hospitality News* suggest that, at least in some cases, the how-to manuals were correct in warning farmers to expect that their guests would recoil at a lack of modern amenities. Unsurprisingly, personal hygiene facilities seem to have been a particular point of contention. Budapest resident Erzsébet Szikora told the newspaper that her stay in Kárász had been entirely pleasant but for one “bothersome trifle”: the condition of the washbasin. She described in some detail a better model – the kind that she was accustomed to using – taller and more pleasing to the eye than the tin basins owned by the villagers for “20 or 30 pengős.” These were too “uncomfortable” for her taste, not to mention “ugly” and quickly rusted into uselessness. Szikora concluded her suggestion with an assurance that the basin she recommended would be an “heirloom, and every village artisan could easily build one.”<sup>91</sup> József Roos, also of Budapest, wrote in to say of his vacation in an anonymous village that he found the environment refreshing and the inhabitants attentive. He recommended the place to anyone who didn't demand big-city conditions. On the debit side, however, Roos felt (slightly contradicting his own advice) that the local merchants' high prices were “appalling,” that the privies “definitely still require much improvement,” and that a “spring mattress would have been desirable.” He also complained about sharing close quarters with “hogs, cattle, and poultry,”

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<sup>89</sup> Sági, *A falusi vendéglátás mestersége*, 10, 13–14.

<sup>90</sup> Szabó, *A fizető vendéglátás kellékei*, 8–9.

<sup>91</sup> Erzsébet Szikora, letter to the editor, *Vendégforgalmi Újság*, March 15, 1937: 6.

which, he warned, a prospective vacationer would have to learn to tolerate. “Although entertaining,” he opined, “the animals’ pens simply should have been placed farther away.”<sup>92</sup>

#### **4.6 THE UNEQUAL BURDEN OF VILLAGE TOURISM ON RURAL FEMALE LABOR**

The how-to manuals, together with the OMVESZ newspaper *Hospitality News*, not only prescribed changes to the habits and spaces that defined peasant hospitality. They also rather more subtly sought to influence the household division of labor, placing on women and girls most of the work necessary for running a semi-commercialized “paying guest” operation. They were to be the cleaners, decorators, cooks, and entertainers; they would perform the essential, public duties of operating a bed-and-breakfast for weeks at a time, presumably on top of their normal chores; their lot was to make possible the vacations of their Hungarian brothers and (especially) sisters of the cities. And, in learning for and from their visitors how to do their jobs “properly,” rural women were to be the main targets of the civilizing mission. Thus the success of paid hospitality depended on the willingness of female villagers to take on new chores and sacrifice what free time they had – in short, receiving an even smaller portion of the division of *leisure*.

Ernő Miklós Sági, who was more willing than other promoters to acknowledge the day-to-day realities of peasant life, proposed that women and girls make their primary contribution to paid hospitality labor by keeping the house clean. This included watering the courtyard and

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<sup>92</sup> József Roos, letter to the editor, *Vendégforgalmi Újság*, April 1, 1937: 7.

house perimeter to control dust, as well as the collection of rubbish outside. It was true, he admitted, that plowing and other urgent, essential work exactly coincided with tourist season. “The farmer and the rest of the household are bent over from the crack of dawn until late in the evening doing sweaty work. Certainly, they have neither time nor desire to busy themselves with the guests...” Consequently Sági suggested that elderly family members and “bigger” children, unsuited for work outside the house, be put to use minding business inside.<sup>93</sup> In the *Necessities of Paid Hospitality*, Tiborné Irsai Szabó took a more exacting position. “The cooking area [or] kitchen is *the barometer of domestic cleanliness*,” she wrote. Harping once again on the issue of hygiene, she held her readership to a formidable standard. “The proper lady’s kitchen is just like a pharmacy. In a disorderly house the kitchen is never clean – nor are people happy to come over.”<sup>94</sup>

Other authors focused on women’s roles as entertainers and cooks, heaping on them a cultural and political significance that extended beyond simply the practicalities of labor. First, it was also the woman of the house’s responsibility to ensure that paid hospitality’s underlying effort to mend relations between town and country did not fall through. Anna Hertay, the “women’s interest” columnist for *Hospitality News* offered, for instance, the observation that the sense of “togetherness” between guests and hosts depended not on *what* the hostess served her visitors to eat, but *how* she served it. “If the run-down housewife, reeking of the kitchen and her hands reddened and wet, emerges at the last second, *she has already failed as a stylish hostess*, no matter how successful or inventive her dishes have been.” What applied to presentation at table also applied to polite conversation. “If the host cannot make convincing inquiries of each guest and thereby *manage such a question* as to inspire or strengthen friendship and spiritual

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<sup>93</sup> Sági, *A falusi vendéglátás mestersége*, 19.

<sup>94</sup> Szabó, *A fizető vendéglátás kellékei*, 9.

closeness, *then in vain she bustles about, filling wineglasses*; hospitality remains just a matter of feeding and watering.” Hertay also advised vigilance for maintaining a cool house, lest the environment become inhospitable to heat-sensitive urban ladies’ wear. If the temperature should become “inappropriate,” she warned, *“it can ruin the whole evening of a lady sporting décolleté or, just the same, thin silk,* and moreover she’ll be lucky not to go home with a cold.”<sup>95</sup>

Some village women were already prepared to learn the arts of good customer service, Szabó proposed, because many had worked in a city as domestic servants and therefore had first-hand experience of urban standards of living. Such women would still remember that “in the better houses the maids would go into the dining room in black clothes and white aprons, set the table, and bring in on saucers someone’s tea and another’s coffee.” For Szabó, however, it wasn’t enough to be a graceful server; one had to combine urbane manners with authentic rural presentation. *“Most desirable, though, is national dress that cheers the heart and soul, summer washing clothes with bright Hungarian embroidery or with dapples, which must not be pushed into the background by the vogue for the so-called Austrian ‘Mándli’ [German Mantel, or short baize coat]; let Hungarian self-esteem be on guard!”*<sup>96</sup>

The second area of concern was the kitchen, that is, more specifically, a fair amount of hand-wringing over the perceived ignorance and incompetence that supposedly marked interwar peasant cuisine. Whereas being a good hostess was mostly a matter of pleasing and retaining guests and in that sense principally for their benefit, cooking skills were something that urban visitors would introduce as a favor to their rural sisters. “The Hungarian farmer is a worthy breed, but unfortunately in many respects [he] is still so backwards,” alleged Anna Hertay in

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<sup>95</sup> Anna Hertay, “Ami a nőket érdekli: A vendéglátás művészete,” *Vendégforgalmi Újság*, February 1938: 6. All emphases in the original.

<sup>96</sup> Szabó, *A fizető vendéglátás kellékei*, 10. All emphases in the original.

*Hospitality News*, “that he needs the most careful and most basic education.” This was a problem that had leeches upward to affect the urban well-to-do, who were often disappointed to find that their village-born maids were capable of little more than boiling pasta. The solution, in Hertay’s estimation, would be to offer rural women extracurricular classes in healthy, practical cooking.<sup>97</sup> Hertay was far from alone in taking this position. Indeed, her apparent inspiration for writing on the subject was a recent address delivered to parliament by prime minister Béla Imrédy, who casually remarked that women in the villages “don’t know how to cook,” as though it could be taken for granted as common knowledge.<sup>98</sup>

On the other hand, Ernő Miklós Sági, writing a few years earlier in 1934, took a sharply different line. Indeed, he rejected the notion that the Hungarian farmer’s wife needed any instruction in how to cook well. “It wouldn’t hurt,” Sági commented, “if ladies browsed popularly-written, good cookbooks”; but in the main the lady of the house should stick to what she knew best. “We ought to stay with good, simple cuisine. We shouldn’t endeavor to cook in the city-style if we don’t know the city cuisine. Let us prepare *well* – carefully, with love, and with choice ingredients – what we are accustomed to, what we have already tried, what we really *can* cook.”<sup>99</sup> This assertion directly contravened the diagnosis of the urban reformers, who presumed that what peasant women needed most was to learn to cook like a solid city woman of the petite-bourgeoisie. Despite Sági’s dissenting opinion, he was in agreement nonetheless with

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<sup>97</sup> Anna Hertay, “Ami a nőket érdekli: Nem tudnak a falusi asszonyok főzni?...”, *Vendégforgalmi Újság*, June 15, 1938: 4. A number of civic, religious, and state organizations in fact offered such courses at various points throughout the interwar period. Led by middle-class women, their purpose was to inculcate female peasants (especially unmarried girls) with knowledge of how to prepare “simple, bourgeois fare. However, as Péter Hámori has pointed out, the classes were not without their discomforts: in one case, the instructors failed to gain the trust of their charges by declining to sample the food they had just prepared. Péter Hámori, “Női szerepek és szociálpolitika Magyarországon 1920-1944,” *Korall*, no. 13 (2003): 44.

<sup>98</sup> Béla Imrédy, *Múlt és jövő határán: beszédek a magyar élet nagy kérdéseiről* (Budapest: Nemzeti Egység Párt, 1938), 45.

<sup>99</sup> Sági, *A falusi vendéglátás mestersége*, 27.



Szabó and Hertay on one point in particular: that the food served to city-slickers should be neither too rich nor too spicy.

#### 4.7 ASSESSING THE EFFECTS OF OMWE/OMVESZ'S EFFORTS

By the vacation season of 1938, after the community development committees had been in operation for nearly three years, OMVESZ supporters were ready to award the organization victory laurels. “Slowly but surely, civilization is beginning to conquer the village,” declared the writer Zsolt Harsányi in a June radio broadcast. “The village civilizes, develops, changes; its people learn of healthier living conditions; it builds baths, plants parks, clears dust from the streets. In the hands of city visitors, the newspaper, book, and radio each finds its way there.”<sup>100</sup> His sentiments echoed those of Béla Blattner, welfare commissioner of Debrecen, who claimed in a *Hospitality News* essay of a few months prior that OMVESZ had been instrumental in funneling capital into cash-starved communities, allowing them to invest in medical clinics, homes for village physicians, and cultural centers. The city-dweller “who hurries several times a day for the doors of the banks, with all their cosmopolitan grandeur” might not immediately appreciate the significance of this achievement, he wrote, but it was making all the difference in the countryside.<sup>101</sup>

Beyond the hopeful eloquence of words like these, OMVESZ records provide rather little in the way of concrete information by which it is possible to assess the relative success or failure of the association’s mission to modernize rural Hungary. At its most illustrative, the official

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<sup>100</sup> “A falut lassan, de biztosan kezdi meghódítani a civilizáció! HARSÁNYI ZSOLT szenzációs rádióelőadása a hazai nyaralásról,” *Vendégforgalmi Újság*, June 15, 1938: 1.

<sup>101</sup> Béla Blattner, “A vendégforgalom szociális jelentősége,” *Vendégforgalmi Újság*, March-April, 1938: 2.

newspaper provided a handful of success stories. To the earlier parable of Kárász, Harsányi's radio address added the rags-to-riches transformation of the Bükk Hills town of Szilvásszék (known today as a resort area), where the cruelty of poverty and back-taxes had reigned but now lived "not a single pauper."<sup>102</sup> Later research on the history of tourism in Kárász would, indeed, seem to confirm that the village's mobilization to support paid tourism reaped dividends for at least some members of the local population.<sup>103</sup> However, it is far from certain whether we may view these as representative examples or must take them to be fortunate exceptions.

Even if the sources are insufficient for a complete evaluation of OMVESZ's impact on the communities in its network, it is possible nonetheless to cross-examine the extant data and arrive at an understanding of some of its dimensions. The most basic of these is the number of clients the OMVESZ community development committees actually served and how much revenue those clients brought in. The data<sup>104</sup> laid out in Table 2 below suggest, at the very least, that, collectively, the committees were successful in attracting growing numbers of village tourists during their first five years of operation. While the published statistics are limited, they do allow for a few observations. First, the jumps in the number of pengős spent per client occurring between 1936-37 and 1937-38 suggest that not only were more vacationers turning to OMVESZ for service, but also that they were staying for longer periods of time, since these figures reflect only the amount clients paid to their hosts for each day of lodging. Thus if clients were spending between 3.5 and 5.5 pengős per diem in 1937, that meant that they could stay for an average of 15 to 24 nights; if prices remained the same (and it is not clear that was the case),

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<sup>102</sup> "A falut lassan, de biztosan kezdi meghódítani a civilizáció! HARSÁNYI ZSOLT szenzációs rádióelőadása a hazai nyaralásról," *Vendégforgalmi Újság*, June 15, 1938: 1.

<sup>103</sup> Mezei, "Kárász és a falusi nyaraltatás," 52–54.

<sup>104</sup> Sources for Table 2: Széchényi, *Az Országos Magyar Vendégforgalmi Szövetség működésének rövid története*, 62; Károly Kaffka, "Az Utas Könyve 1940. évi kiadásának előszava," in *A falusi turizmus hagyományai*, ed. Dezső Kovács (Budapest: Mezőgazda, 2003), 46. Note that the latter source is a reprint of the original table from 1940.

then in 1939 clients were staying for an average of 17 to 27 nights.<sup>105</sup> But, even if prices rose proportionately, these figures indicate that OMVESZ clients stayed with their hosts for two, three, or perhaps four weeks at a time in what were in no doubt many cases probably fairly close quarters: a duration significant enough to allow for the kind of personal contact and “cultural exchange” that the community development committees tried to foster. Of course – and as will be discussed below – available sources confirm little to nothing about whether this very intangible aspect of the organization’s mission was indeed successful.

**Table 2. Results of the activity of OMVESZ Community Development Committees, 1935-1939**

	Villages Participating	Clients	Total Client Expenditures (in pengős)	Expenditure per Client (in pengős)
1935	127	12,624	853,200	67.59
1936	148	24,780	1,665,600	67.22
1937	168	37,280	3,120,330	83.70
1938	180	46,371	4,249,038	91.63
1939	252	69,038	6,455,891	93.51
Total	—	190,118	16,386,359	—

Second and more measurable is OMVESZ’s goal of providing Hungarians a viable alternative to vacationing in other countries. Statistics for domestic tourist spending in Hungary during the interwar period are generally lacking, but they do exist for amounts of currency exported (if not necessarily spent) abroad, because foreign currencies had to be acquired through the Hungarian National Bank. In 1937, Hungarian tourists brought 49.5 million pengős to other

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<sup>105</sup> The figures on nightly rates come from Széchenyi, *Az Országos Magyar Vendégforgalmi Szövetség működésének rövid története*, 53.

countries.<sup>106</sup> By contrast, OMVESZ clients paid out over 3.21 million pengős to their hosts, or about 6.3 per cent of what went abroad. Although this was well over double the proportion in 1935 (2.3 per cent), expenditures abroad were also rising (up 32 per cent from the 37.6 million pengős in 1935), making it difficult to know whether OMVESZ was in fact “recovering” a share of lost internal revenue by convincing tourists to stay “at home” or simply benefiting from an economic climate that was becoming more favorable to tourism overall.

Third and broadest is the question of how large of a share OMVESZ-sponsored tourism had in the domestic tourism industry as a whole. Right away, three problems present themselves. First, official numbers on tourist visits to places other than Budapest are very poor – indeed, with the exception of some towns around Lake Balaton, they were apparently not kept in any central digest until 1936.<sup>107</sup> Second, the semi-formal tourism that OMVESZ fostered did not generate much paperwork and was therefore less likely to be documented, although the exchanges arranged by OMVESZ community development committees were an obvious exception to this tendency. Third, it is impossible to know the extent to which OMVESZ’s statistics overlap with the summary statistics for Hungary in general.

Therefore, when considering the relative significance of OMVESZ’s impact on the Hungarian tourism industry, we find that its work accounted for somewhere around seven to eight percent of the countrywide total. The uncertainty here comes once again from the ambiguity of interwar tourism statistics. First, if the numbers provided by OMVESZ reflected registered visitors already accounted for in the official records, then the 37,280 clients served by OMVESZ in 1937 would represent eight percent of the number of registered visitors to

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<sup>106</sup> Márta Juszti, “‘Utazgassunk hazánk földjén!’: A belföldi turizmus problémái a két világháború között Magyarországon,” *Korall* 26 (2006): 195.

<sup>107</sup> Magyar Gazdaságkutató Intézet, *A magyar idegenforgalom alakulása 1927-1937* (Budapest: Magyar Gazdaságkutató Intézet, 1938), 42 and 45–46.

Budapest, Lake Balaton resorts, and 10 other cities in the same year. If, however, the official figures *did not* include the OMVESZ guest registrations, then the proportion would be 7.4 percent.<sup>108</sup> In any event, either outcome can be seen as a substantial achievement for a non-profit organization with a small budget.

These data reveal little, however, about the extent to which expansion of paid hospitality can be credited for spreading “civilization” to the agrarians who were supposed to need it. For all of the OMVESZ activists’ insistence that their work had begun to transform the countryside, it is by no means obvious how the proceeds from paid hospitality were divided among social strata. How many of the nearly 200,000 registered guests served by the community development committees between 1935 and 1939 actually stayed in small localities or with peasant families, thus fulfilling the model of hospitality presented in the guidebooks by Szabó and Sági?

The *Traveler’s Book* was every OMVESZ agent’s Bible, and they consulted it whenever generating a list of travel options for their clients; therefore it is the first place to turn for data. The results are revealing. Despite the great effort expended by OMWE/OMVESZ members to promote paid hospitality in the villages, the system was not very prominently featured in the original, base edition of the volume from 1935. Under the heading “room and board” in the listing for each of the 301 locales, the volume seemed to privilege conventional commercial enterprises over private homes. It mentioned hotels first, followed by inns (*vendéglők*), and lastly – where it was listed at all – paid hospitality. The book made further distinctions between homes where “pension-style” (*penziószerű*) full or half board was available for purchase and those that offered only a room. In the latter case the listing would specify the cost for rooms rated as “first

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid. The ten other cities are: Debrecen, Eger, Győr, Mészökövesd, Pécs, Sopron, Szeged, Székesfehérvár, Szolnok, and Szombathely. The grand total of visitors to Budapest, Balaton (localities unspecified), and these ten cities was 465,464. If the OMVESZ figures were “missing” from that total, after adding 37,280 the adjusted total then would be 502,744 registered guests.

class,” “second class,” or “third class.” This rating system was not OMWE’s own; rather, it was determined by the local informants who paid to have their city, village, or resort advertised in the *Traveler’s Book*. In general the guide did not have much to say about the households open to paying guests. Whereas it named the local hotels and inns, it almost always lumped paid hospitality opportunities into anonymous groups of unknown size. Moreover, it was typically quite taciturn about the social positions of the households. Of the *Traveler’s Book*’s 301 entries for localities outside of Budapest, 20 indicated that a “farmer” (*gazda*) was the host (one of which stated specifically that the household could only satisfy “more modest requirements”); three simply said “families”; one said “landowner” (*földbirtokos*, suggesting a member of the gentry); one declared the hosts to be members of a judge’s household. Only a single entry affirmed the venue to be the home of a peasant, a quantity precisely equal to the number of opportunities to stay in the canteen of a cement factory – it was, in other words, an oddity.<sup>109</sup>

Information found in other OMVESZ sources helps to illuminate this question a little bit further. The Pest County archives contain a 1936 supplement to the *Traveler’s Book* that provides detailed information on approximately 60 additional lodging opportunities scattered throughout the country. The listings span a wide range from the humble to the palatial. Some of them promise nothing more than a dry space with flooring, furniture, and perhaps access to a bathroom. Verandas, apparently, were held to be a potential selling point. In the tier above these evidently simple homes are villas with unpredictable combinations of modern amenities. These usually had a bathroom and often electric lighting, and offered some source of entertainment, such as a radio, a library, a piano, or social games. One offering from Tolna County boasts a house with four guestrooms, an “interurban telephone,” a tennis court, a Ping-Pong table, and an

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<sup>109</sup> For the cement factory, located in Bélapátfalva: Kaffka and Széchényi, *Az utas könyve*, 544.

optional price package that included a daily bath and a glass of wine – but no electric lighting. In Pest County one could inquire at a house that was both “modern” and decorated in a “Hungarian style,” or room at the home of a physician who put forward “permanent medical supervision at no charge.” For the most fortunate vacationers a handful of country chateaux were available, among them a baronial manor and the estate of a former Lord Lieutenant, the loftiest rank a provincial official could attain. All of these were predictably luxurious, but not always equally hospitable: one woman extended the prospect of summering at her electrified mansion in Vas County, complete with the services of her chauffeur – but only to those “Christian gentlefolk” – in other words, “no Jews” – who were willing to pay 50 fillér for a bath.

In sum, it seems impossible to claim that there was anything like a “typical” kind of venue that OMVESZ offered to its clients. Yet of the five dozen or so households enumerated in the list, only one immediately resembled the up-by-the-bootstraps peasant household imagined in the how-to guides: the home of a Zemplén County master blacksmith, whose one room for rent had a dirt floor, which, he promised, was dry. Indeed, a considerable minority of the advertisers made a point of describing their household as *úri*, or “genteel.” A military officer from Bihár County, for example, invited vacationers to his “genteel house” to enjoy its “genteel Hungarian cuisine with a diet menu upon request.” This appellation did not necessarily explain anything about the amenities of the house; rather, it seems to have been first and foremost a marker of social distinction and, one imagines, a ward against guests of the “wrong sort.” Indeed, on three occasions (including the one just mentioned), the listings openly discouraged inquiries from Jews. But one facet of the how-to handbooks does, in fact, seem to appear in this collection. At least half of the individuals referred to in the ads they submitted were self-ascribed to be women, including a significant number of widows, a fact that lends further support for seeing paid

hospitality as a predominantly feminine field of labor. On the other hand, this also suggests that semi-professional hospitality work placed the ladies of the house in a managerial position. This rather undermines the image, put forward by urban campaigners, of the naïve rural matron in need of advice from her urban sisters on how to run a household.

Based on these listings, we may well come to the conclusion that while OMVESZ was successful in bringing ever more vacationers to the countryside, it tended to direct them to households that, arguably, were already “civilized.” At the very least, this impression suggests that the bulk of OMVESZ-arranged paid hospitality did not play out in dirt-floored houses lacking even a simulacrum of modern comforts, as pictured in the how-to guides. Plenty of homes better suited to urban expectations were immediately available and therefore more immediately commercially viable. This does not necessarily indicate that paid hospitality’s civilizing mission should be judged a disingenuous failure – certainly not without better data – but it does intimate that OMVESZ activists conceived of both the “village” and of “civilization” in broad terms. If in their minds the village reasonably included villas and mansions as easily as hovels, then it was perhaps more a stand-in for the “countryside” at large: a fixed point in a vague space signifying backwardness and poverty. Beautifying the public spaces of specific villages in the service of tourism, as exemplified in Kárász and Szilvásvár, were obvious signs of progress, the benefits of which would hopefully radiate outward and touch the lives of everyone there. This accords, in its way, with the belief that the notary, the priest, the doctor, and the teacher were beacons of proper living; “civilization” would cascade from the top of rural society to the bottom; the peasants would be inspired to elevate themselves to the level of these paragons, one watering-can shower at a time.



#### 4.8 RESTORING CULTURE TO THE CULTURE-BEARERS

But what was the balance of progress on the other side – the national-moral betterment of the urbanites whose connection to “real” Hungarian culture was supposedly on the wane? OMVESZ activists certainly did not see their undertakings as being at all one-sided. They pressed forward with the conviction that the experience of village tourism was meant to be a mutually uplifting exchange for both host and guest. Peasants were to receive the gift of a better way of living and, in turn, would act as living wells of “real Hungarian culture” from which urbanites could draw to replenish their own depleted supply. This message was transmitted to both sides of the host-guest relationship. In an implicit attempt to calm the doubts of would-be hosts, *The Necessaries of Paid Hospitality* encouraged village folk to see the influx of out-of-towners not (according to the subtext) as an irritating, even potentially alienating experience, but rather as a boon to themselves and to the nation as a whole. “Thanks to the vacationers, the general level of culture in the community will also rise. A friendly connection will arise between the vacationer and the hosting farmer. This friendly connection – if the host farmer develops it with true Hungarian hospitality – will result in unconditionally rewarding, desirable cooperation and contact between the city and village population; a connection, what’s more, that is the basis of a better and more beautiful Hungarian future.”<sup>110</sup>

Prospective tourists, for their part, were given triumphant assurances that their OMVESZ-arranged vacation was but one more knot in the ever-tightening bond between urban and rural Hungary. In their preface to the third and final edition of the *Traveler’s Book*,

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<sup>110</sup> Szabó, *A fizető vendéglátás kellékei*, 4.

published in 1940, the editors looked back with obvious pride (if not necessarily with evidence) on what they believed to have been an ongoing success:

[...W]e see the truest benefit of our work not in [the] enumerated and tangible data, but rather in the fact that in the course five years we have cultivated an immediate connection between the urban population and the people of the Hungarian village. This direct connection has taught the village the wisdom of healthy civilization and instructed the city in a stronger knowledge of the nature of the Hungarian race. If more sunlight and more fresh air flows into the bigger windows of the Hungarian peasant house, then the entirely more precious sunlight of the untainted Hungarian language, of recognition of the plowing-sowing husbandman, and of esteem for the aboriginal ethnicity [*törzsökös fajiság*] has streamed into the soul of the city-dweller.”<sup>111</sup>

The idea that the residents of Budapest could (and should) “restore” their true Hungarian identities through contact with rural life was hardly the invention of paid hospitality promoters. It stemmed from the counterrevolutionary panic of the early 1920s, its ideological roots planted in the late-nineteenth century conservative backlash against industrialization and its consequences. According to Gábor Gyáni, the “tone of the inter-war discourse about Budapest” held that “the ‘natural’ non-Hungarianness of this cosmopolitan metropolis within Austria-Hungary was soon effaced by the Magyarizing influence of a country that had now (post-Trianon) become a nation; with two-thirds of its territory taken away from the truncated country, the capital would at last be able to cast off its previously accreted sins of lacking national spirit.” The “continuous

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<sup>111</sup> Kaffka, “Az Utas Könyve 1940. évi kiadásának előszava,” 46.

monitoring” of progress on this front, Gyáni asserts, became “something of a national pastime.”<sup>112</sup>

OMVESZ supporters were not alone in believing that tourism might be a means of “re-integrating” the former imperial capital into the rest of the nation. Alexander Vari’s study of the St. Stephen’s Week promotional campaign initiated in the mid-1920s demonstrates this idea at work from the early years of the interwar period. The campaign retrofitted the low-key annual ceremony of parading of the hand of St. Stephen, founder and patron saint of the Kingdom of Hungary, into an elaborate festival. It was designed, in essence, to help rusticate Budapest by attracting crowds of visitors from the provinces and feature them in a celebration of traditional rural life. But, as Vari has found, the original, explicitly nationalist purpose of the enterprise experienced a “slow colonization... by consumerist practices” as the years went on. Although nationalists never ceased their efforts to recapture the city they saw as a dangerous stronghold of cosmopolitanism – indeed, only ramped them up as the political hard-right swept definitely into power in the late 1930s – they were forced nonetheless to contend with cultural trends and global market forces that made tourism to big-city Budapest profitable.<sup>113</sup>

In a less aggressive fashion and on a personal rather than metropolitan level, OMVESZ activists intended for paid hospitality to do the same work as the St. Stephen festival. In the opinion of welfare commissioner Béla Blattner, OMVESZ was singularly successful in performing this labor of cultural homogenization. He wrote in *Hospitality News* that “discovering” the village had become a fashionable thing: what the better parts of urban society once learned exclusively through bad cabaret stereotypes had now become *au courant*. “Those

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<sup>112</sup> Gábor Gyáni, “Budapest Beyond Good and Evil,” *The Hungarian Quarterly*, no. 180 (2005): 72.

<sup>113</sup> Alexander Vari, “Re-Territorializing the ‘Guilty City’: Nationalist and Right-Wing Attempts to Nationalize Budapest during the Interwar Period,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 47, no. 4 (2012): 709–33.

who knew the Hungarian village only from newspaper bulletins or schoolbooks could think of it as a place of settlement consisting of tiny mud huts tucked away in a mud sea that lives a profoundly quiet life far from the sweeping speed of [modern] means of transportation.” OMVESZ’s triumph lay in the fact that it was “based on the bringing together of two layers of society afflicted by crisis, and [took] the urbanite with wasted nerves to the faltering Hungarian villager; the two battle-weary Hungarians meet one another, coming to know each other’s values...”<sup>114</sup>

As a case in point, Blatter hailed the wholesome, quasi-magical effects that paid hospitality allegedly had on women. The peasants inoculated the cities with the “true Hungarian spirit” in their songs, dances, and other folk displays; the urban ladies enlightened peasant homemakers on how to expand the *table d’hôte* with lighter, healthier selections. When the “anemic” city woman arrived in the village with “pale” offspring in tow, she and her charges benefited from fresh air and “honest-to-goodness Hungarian milk.” Despite her own worn-down condition, she repaid these favors by sharing medical advice with the “exhausted village mother” who couldn’t “secure for her children their daily mother’s milk” – a suggestion that she was too tired and malnourished to lactate adequately.<sup>115</sup> Blattner went so far as to propose that the paying guest movement had awakened a new spirit of motherliness in women vacationers. Indulging in a patriarchal fantasy of maternal fantasizing, Blattner spun for his readers an arcadian morality tale. He evoked the typical Hungarian village, “its mulberry tree nodding serenely.” In its shade “the Hungarian sits on [his/her] walking chair, tired from work, peacefully nibbling on [his/her] supper; all around, ruddy-cheeked Hungarian tots smile up at [him/her], especially when [he/she] presses a few choice morsels into their tiny mouths.” All is not so idyllic for everyone in the

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<sup>114</sup> Béla Blattner, “A vendégforgalom szociális jelentősége,” *Vendégforgalmi Újság*, March-April, 1938: 2.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

village, however. “From the porch of the country house, the athletically-figured metropolitan lady looks upon this picture with a sigh, and for a moment the distant image of her old age passes before her: when no merry-faced grandkids clamor around her; the mama-jokes in *Fliegende Blätter* [a bourgeois and apparently cosmopolitan humor magazine printed in Munich] won’t have anything to do with her, because till now she has forgotten about the most beautiful feminine calling – motherhood.” Thus Blattner heralded “an invisible battle against urban childlessness” as rural tourism’s “latest social impact.”<sup>116</sup>

The Hungarian language’s lack of grammatical gender, as well as Blattner’s silence on the subject, leaves the gender of the bucolic Hungarian described in this passage unspecified. While it would be incorrect to impose a definite masculine or feminine identity on the figure, the subsequent image of the wistful city lady implies a deliberate opposition of joyful, *feminine* peasant fecundity and barren urban vanity. Blattner’s message here seems clear enough: modern urban women threaten to rob themselves of the joy of motherhood, but observing their provincial sisters will be the tonic that cures them of their misguided ways.

But the message, though clear, is an unexpected one. In the debates over the “peasant question” in the 1930s, the problem of the *egyke*, or single-child family, was a matter of great controversy. The necessary implication of birth control – including infanticide – lent the issue a special moral prickliness, amplified further by preexisting anxieties over the hereditary survival of the Hungarians in a sea of hostile (and inferior) cultures. Commentators therefore tended to see the fearsome visage of their opponents peering out from behind the *egyke*. Béla Bodó relates that for anti-status quo populists the single-child family “symbolized the survival and continuing strength of feudal political and social structures.” For conservatives, it “embodied what they

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<sup>116</sup> Blattner, “A vendégforgalom szociális jelentősége.”

considered to be the negative features of modern civilization, such as increasing secularization, women's emancipation, and the spread of bourgeois values and urban lifestyles."<sup>117</sup> Blattner's reverie-within-a-reverie appears all the more dreamlike for its presentation of a countryside untroubled by deliberate infertility, yet imperiled enough for tourism to come to the rescue.

Although some rural tourism promoters like Blattner clearly had grand visions for what the paid hospitality movement could and should accomplish, the fact remains that the movement's apostles had much more articulate prescriptions for the "improvement" of village hosts than they did for the urban guests. Still less did they submit evidence that the experience actually re-Hungarianized the insufficiently "national" city-dwellers, even in the OMVESZ organ *Hospitality News*. Nevertheless, an October 1938 issue contained what the editors purported to be the transcription of a letter from an OMVESZ client who had sent his/her son off on vacation. At first, related the author, the boy did not enjoy his new surroundings, and his concerned parent suffered from qualms about the "misbelief" that "it is not done to allow a well-raised young gentleman into the company of peasant children, as he would only learn bad habits from them." But then, *mirable dictu*:

Already by the second week I experienced an enormous change in my little boy: he had learned Hungarian! That is, of course, he had been Hungarian all along, but regrettably he had known only 'Pestish.' From the first grade onward he learned city hoodlum phrases [*pesti jasszkifejezéseket*], spoke in jargon, which we tried in vain at home to break him out of. He was delicate, and effeminate like a little miss from an earlier century. Now, within the span of a summer month it was as though he was a changed person.

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<sup>117</sup> Béla Bodó, *Tiszazug: A Social History of a Murder Epidemic* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2002), 56.

Editor, sir! I don't exaggerate when I say it wasn't just the country air that did this, not just the moving around in the open, but rather the environment. When I visited my family for the second time, I was ear-witness to the following: my son – when it seemed that he had hit himself while playing – let out with a long and whiny 'maaaaa!' At this one of his little playmates, a round-headed Hungarian child of scarcely eight years responded, 'They don't say "maaamaa," they say MOTHER!' Editor sir! It was all in this one word. It all made sense to me..."<sup>118</sup>

The editors commented with deep approval that this story had exactly the correct outcome: that Hungarians needed to raise the next generation to cross the usual social group boundaries in a fraternal spirit and in the interest of the homeland.

This isolated example was as concrete as OMVESZ supporters ever were in articulating what the re-Hungarianization of urban vacationers should look like. They published no how-to guides on being better Magyars, as they did on modernizing peasants' homes; they offered no advice columns on how city visitors should behave around their hosts with the goal of making them better guests. They were confident in their knowledge of how "civilization" should appear, smell, and feel, and they knew how it could be gained. But they left the improvement of the culture-bearers to the will and imagination of the culture-bearers themselves.

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<sup>118</sup> "A mi parlamentünk: Falusi gyerek – városi gyerek," *Vendégforgalmi Újság*, October 15, 1938: 4–5.

## 4.9 CONCLUSION

In the final balance, then, the history of OMWE/OMVESZ and its promotion of the “paid hospitality” style of rural tourism stands as a rich, early example of “development tourism.” It demonstrates how commercial ambitions on both the local and national political-economic level can combine with a certain brand of social activism to form an ambiguous hybrid. Here, in practical terms, the commercial function produced the most obvious and measurable outcomes – but it was the rhetoric of social welfare that dominated the pages of OMVESZ publications.

Although the social mission that OMVESZ took up was designed to be one that would equally satisfy the ostensible needs of all those who participated, it is difficult not to view the ultimate result as one-sided. As “sinful” and un-Hungarian as their city was supposed to be, the middle-class denizens of Budapest always seemed to emerge in this story as both the saviors of the countryside and, tacitly, the group whose needs took precedence. In an intriguing way, this reflects a new twist on the civilizing mission that Hungarian (and Austrian) nationalist activists pursued in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Before the war, tourist organizations had a hand in the drive to “conquer” territory and claim people on the side of various nationalisms. German nationalists imagined that fostering a Germans-only tourism industry in Bohemia, supposedly free of Czech influence, would raise new legions of activists in the provinces and help disrupt the economies of Czech-speaking communities.<sup>119</sup> Hungarian tourist associations shifted the focus of their activities from a “consumption-centered and multiethnic... admiration of nature and

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<sup>119</sup> Pieter Judson, “‘Every German Visitor Has a Völkisch Obligation He Must Fulfill’: Nationalist Tourism in the Austrian Empire, 1880-1918,” in *Histories of Leisure*, ed. Rudy Koshar (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2002), 147–68; Pieter M. Judson, “The Bohemian Oberammergau: Nationalist Tourism in the Austrian Empire,” in *Constructing Nationalities in East Central Europe*, ed. Pieter M. Judson and Marsha L. Rozenblit (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2005), 89–106; Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), 141–176.



beauty” to what Alexander Vári has characterized as a quasi-militarized imperialist project of Magyarizing and “civilizing” the countryside.<sup>120</sup> The paid hospitality movement looked very much like a less aggressive, more consumer-minded continuation of both these projects, even if they did not share the same pedigree.

In this sense, we might go so far as to suggest that the movement represented part of a greater reaction of the élite to the premature end of the imperialist, centralizing project of the Dualist governments. Karen Barkey has suggested that the Hungarian style of official nation-building after the 1867 Compromise was quite similar to the concurrent mission of turning “peasants into Frenchmen” in Eugen Weber’s classic account.<sup>121</sup> Through educational policies and restrictions on language use, nationalist activists of the Liberal Era sought to “Magyarize,” and thereby “elevate,” the non-Hungarians living within the kingdom in a way that would have been quite familiar to the officials of the French Third Republic. However, thinking of this project only as the imperialist “Magyarization” of Slovak-, Serbian-, or Romanian-speaking peasants (et al.) fails to consider the extent to which it was also an attempt to educate, mold, and elevate the diverse *Hungarian-speaking* peasants as the élite saw necessary. The character of OMVESZ’s paid hospitality campaign strongly suggests that this imperial mission was neither forgotten nor accomplished.

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<sup>120</sup> Alexander Vari, “From Friends of Nature to Tourist-Soldiers: Nation Building and Tourism in Hungary, 1873-1914,” in *Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism*, ed. Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), 64–81.

<sup>121</sup> Karen Barkey, “Negotiated Paths to Nationhood: A Comparison of Hungary and Romania in the Early Twentieth Century,” *East European Politics and Societies* 14 (2000): 497–531.

## 5.0 FAIRYTALES AT THE GRAND HOTEL

In this final chapter, numerous themes from the previous chapters converge on an important but generally unheralded fixture of post-imperial popular culture: the “hotel movie.” Interwar cinemagoers in Austria and Hungary, and no less those in Germany, the United States, and any other corner of the transatlantic film market, were not only frequent virtual tourists; for, befitting any traveler, their simulated journeys very frequently checked them into the lobbies, hallways, rooms, restaurants, bars, casinos, and patios of hotels both grand and humble. The first section of this chapter surveys the apparent popularity of movies set in, or indeed specifically about, hotels in the cinema world of the 1930s and 1940s. By way of a discussion of Edmund Goulding’s landmark 1932 feature *Grand Hotel*, the section probes some possible explanations for why this was. One particularly compelling reason will be examined in detail: the idea that the experience of moviegoing itself, which offered a temporary escape from the everyday, was so similar to certain aspects of being in a hotel that it was only “natural” that the two should merge as frequently as they did.

These preliminary investigations prepare for the remaining majority of the chapter, which offers in-depth, comparative studies of two real-world hotels, both of which were the subject of culturally significant films. The first is the Palotaszálló (Palace Hotel) built in the late 1920s in Lillafüred, a subalpine resort area in Hungary northwest of the capital. A remarkably controversial project, Lillafüred consciously and unconsciously embodied period-defining

ideological trends and fictions of post-imperial Hungary, among them irredentist nationalism, the connection between tourism and *Honismeret*, and left-wing opposition to the government of István Bethlen. This essay contends that Lillafüred's supporters actively created a thick cloud of mystique around the Palotaszálló, de-politicizing it as a kind of fairy-story castle where the dreams of the Hungarian nation came true. The single greatest expression of this mystification was the hugely successful film *Meseautó* [Dream Car] (1934), which prominently featured the hotel as its crowning visual and thematic attraction. Through *Meseautó* and its successors, Lillafüred became fixed as a magical land-beyond-reality, immune to the conflicts of the era.

The Palotaszálló's Austrian parallel was the Weißes Rößl (White Horse) hotel, the "pearl" of the Salzkammergut region. Unlike Lillafüred and its flagship establishment, the fame of the Salzkammergut and the White Horse predated World War One by more than a decade. Their mystification began already in the 1890s with the premier of a popular stage play, *Im weißen Rößl* (At the White Horse Inn), which became an even more popular operetta in 1930. However, this chapter focuses on the first sound film in the *Im weißen Rößl* "franchise," directed by Carl Lamač in 1935. It argues that Lamač's adaptation not only furthered the pre-existing mystification of the Salzkammergut as a trouble-free place where "one can be really merry," but in fact took advantage of its medium to create a striking visual experience that immersed the viewer in a version of the Austrian *Heimat*. Just as *Meseautó* adopted Lillafüred as its space for the fantastic resolution (or, simply, nullification) of social and political conflicts, so too did *Im weißen Rößl* – but with a distinctly Austrian twist.

## 5.1 THE ABUNDANCE OF HOTELS IN EARLY SOUND CINEMA

Hotels seemed to have occupied a privileged place in the movie cosmos of the 1930s and 1940s – not only in Austria and Hungary, but in the much larger production centers of Hollywood and Berlin as well. The flagship example of this was Edmund Goulding’s 1932 blockbuster *Grand Hotel*. The movie, based on a best-selling 1929 novel by German author Vicki Baum, successfully wrangled four of the biggest stars at the time (Joan Crawford, John Barrymore, Wallace Beery, and, above all, Greta Garbo) into a personality-driven melodrama set inside a buzzing, bedazzling acme of the Great Urban Cosmopolitan Hotel. The hotel, which Goulding consciously designed to be “bigger and more important than any people in it,” is a sort of giant, chaotic dollhouse in which the principal characters fatefully intersect or merge into each other’s storylines, such that none in particular presents itself as *the* plot.<sup>1</sup> There is Preysing (Beery), the pompous and conniving capitalist, desperate to push through a business deal at any price; Flaemmchen (Crawford), the vivacious stenographer, whom Preysing hires with more than just paperwork in mind, and who wields her sexuality with confidence around the other leading men; Grusinskaya (Garbo), a world-weary ballerina in the apparent twilight of her career, who is adored by many but loved truly by no one; Baron Felix von Gaigern (John Barrymore), a gentleman gambler and thief who robs Grusinskaya’s heart after stealing her jewels; and Kringelein (Lionel Barrymore), an employee of Preysing’s who, in the face of terminal illness, has come to the Grand Hotel to burn through his life savings to go out in a blaze of glory living like a rich man. Their fortunes weave around one another: Gaigern and Grusinskaya fall in love; but, unbeknownst to her, Preysing kills Gaigern before they can run away together; with

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Matthew Kennedy, *Edmund Goulding’s Dark Victory: Hollywood’s Genius Bad Boy* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 119.

Preysing being carted off to jail, Flaemmchen avoids his lechery and convinces Kringelein, who has become her more-than-platonic patron, to seek treatment in Paris. As if to denounce the existential insignificance of it all, the grave Dr. Otternschlag (Lewis Stone) delivers the film's final line, just before the camera dollies into the street, away from a perpetually-moving revolving door, the first time that the viewer exits the building's hermetic emotional world: "Grand Hotel: always the same. People come, people go. Nothing ever happens."

Goulding's film was certainly not the first to unfold within the confines of a hotel – the opening scene in the lobby, for instance, was very possibly inspired by F.W. Murnau's *Der letzte Mann* (1924)<sup>2</sup> – but its commercial and artistic success (judging, at the very least, by the fact it won that Academy Award for Best Picture) was pivotal in developing what one might call the "hotel movie" subgenre in international cinema. Even a less-than-systematic investigation reveals the influence that *Grand Hotel* (and hotels more generally) seem to have had on transatlantic movie production in the 1930s and 1940s. By reading through reviews and descriptions printed in the Austrian periodicals *Mein Film*, *Der gute Film*, the German *Illustrierter Film-Kurir*, and the synopses given in Balázs Varga's catalog of Hungarian feature films,<sup>3</sup> one can identify no fewer than 66 movies produced in Germany, the United States, Austria, or Hungary between 1929 and 1944 that depict a hotel in some capacity.<sup>4</sup> The list is

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<sup>2</sup> This, at least, is Matthew Kennedy's speculation. *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>3</sup> Balázs Varga, ed., *Játékfilmek 1931-1998*, 2nd ed. (Budapest: Magyar Filmintézet, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> To conserve space, countries of origin have been abbreviated as follows: G = Germany; A = Austria; H = Hungary; US = United States; CH = Switzerland. 1929: *Schwarzwaldmädel* (G); 1930: *Eine Freundin so Goldig wie Du* (G); 1931: *A két bálvány* (H); *Der falsche Ehemann* (G); *Wochenend im Paradies* (G); *Eine Nacht im Grand Hotel* (G); *Die Koffe des Herrn O.F.* (G); 1932: *Grand Hotel* (US); *...und es Leuchtet die Puszta* (G/H); *Skandal im Grandhotel*, a.k.a. *Fürst Seppl* (G); *Zwei Herzen und ein Schlag* (G); *Die vier vom Bob 13* (*Alpensymphonie*) (G); *Das Lied einer Nacht* (G); *Ein toller Einfall* (G); 1933: *Egy éj Velencében*, a.k.a. *Eine Nacht in Venedig* (H/G); *Az ellopott szerda*, a.k.a. *Liebesfotograf*, a.k.a. *Tokajerglut* (H); *Der Page vom Dalmasse-Hotel* (G); *Das verliebte Hotel* (G); *Spione im Savoy-Hotel* (G); 1934: *Meseautó* (H); *Fräulein Frau* (G); *Liebe dumme Mama* (G); *Jungfrau gegen Mönch* (G); *Here is My Heart* (US); *Der Fall Brenken* (G); *Zimmermädchen... Dreimal Klingen* (G); *Herz ist Trumpf* (G); 1935: *Ein Winternachtstraum* (G); *Eine Nacht im Palast-Hotel* (G); *Im weißen Rössl* (A); *Címzett ismeretlen* (H); *Page Miss Glory* (US); *The Gay Deception* (US); *One New York Night* (US); *Elnökkisasszony* (H);

hardly comprehensive – it relies on what the writers thought useful to report, comes from incomplete library collections, and covers only sound films – but nevertheless should bear persuasive witness to how common hotels were as settings for international cinema during this period.

One potential explanation for this relative ubiquity has to do both with the influence of *Grand Hotel* and the sheer dramaturgical effectiveness of using a hotel to tell a story. Hotels are by nature well-defined physical and social spaces, bounded by walls and no less importantly by barriers of authority and belonging. At the same time, however, they are energized by the inherent tension between privacy and exposure; between spaces that are supposed to be as private as one's own bedroom and those that are open to the free wandering of the building's other temporary denizens – and the intrusions of its staff.<sup>5</sup> The interplay between physical surety and social instability makes hotels neat boxes in which certain kinds of plots can play out especially well. But not only hotels: the same can be said of other, similar travel-oriented spaces, such as trains and ocean liners.<sup>6</sup> Irving Thalberg, the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer producer who picked up the option on Baum's novel, prophesied that *Grand Hotel* would leave a lasting

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*Ball im Savoy*, a.k.a. *Bál a Savoyban* (H); *The Great Hotel Murder* (US); 1936: *Fräulein Lilli* (A); *Verlieb Dich nicht am Bodensee* (G); *Savoy-Hotel 217* (G); *Mädchenpensionat* (A); *Wer ist Wer?*, a.k.a. *Schabernack* (G); *Befehl ist Befehl* (G); *Wo die Lerche Singt* (G/CH/H); *Libeled Lady* (US); 1937: *Hotel Kikelet* (H); *Édes a bosszú* (H); *Sportszerelem* (H); *Rád bízom a feleségem* (H); *Fremdenheim Filoda*, a.k.a. *Pension Filoda* (G); *The Bride Wore Red* (US); *La Habanera* (G); 1938: *Konzert im Tirol* (A); *Die Umwege des schönen Karl* (G); 1939: *Hochzeitsreise zu dritt* (G); *Mátyás rendet csinál* (H); 1941: *Édes ellenfél* (H); *Havasi napsütés* (H); *Ma, tegnap, holnap* (H); 1942: *Egér a palotában* (H); *Csalodás* (H); *Sommerliebe* (G); 1943: *Reisebekannftschaft* (G); *Ágrólkiszakadt úrilány* (H); *A "28-as"* (H); *Die Wirtin zum Weißen Röß'l* (G); 1944: *Gazdátlan asszony* (H); *Kétszer kettő* (H).

<sup>5</sup> Habbo Knoch concisely but helpfully discusses the complex spatial dynamics of the grand hotel in Habbo Knoch, "Das Grandhotel," in *Orte der Moderne: Erfahrungswelten des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Alexa Geisthövel and Habbo Knoch (Frankfurt and New York: Campus Verlag, 2005), 131–40. On the peculiarity of hotel lobbies: Douglas Tallack, "'Waiting, Waiting': The Hotel Lobby, in the Modern City," in *The Hieroglyphics of Space: Reading and Experiencing the Modern Metropolis*, ed. Neil Leach (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 139–51.

<sup>6</sup> It is not for nothing that Jenő Király and Gyöngyi Balogh, when looking specifically at interwar Hungarian cinema, quipped that marine vessels often functioned as "floating hotels." Jenő Király and Gyöngyi Balogh, "*Csak egy nap a világ...*": *A magyar műfaj- és stílustörténete, 1929-1936* (Budapest: Magyar Filmintézet, 2000), 116.

influence on the “form and mood” of films to come. “For instance, we may have such settings as a train, where all the action happens in a journey from one city to another; or action that takes place during the time a boat sails from one harbor and culminates with the end of trip. The general idea will be that of drama induced by the chance meeting of a group of conflicting and interesting personalities.”<sup>7</sup> Matthew Kennedy judges Thalberg’s prediction an accurate one, arguing that “the influence of *Grand Hotel* on moviemaking is beyond cataloging. Several people come together under one tent, act out the entire spectrum of life from rollicking humor to unspeakable tragedy, and then part, changed forever. Whether the setting is an island, a concentration camp, an airport, a battlefield, a racetrack, a city, a hospital, or an ocean liner – all became backdrops for *Grand Hotel*-like storytelling.”<sup>8</sup>

Another reason why hotels were popular in interwar cinema may have stemmed from their attractive distinction from the everyday realities of most moviegoers. In addition to the fact that hotels easily took on the illusion of being worlds unto themselves, isolated superficially from the greater political and socio-economic environments in which they exist, they also tended to be presented as the most definitive habitat of the wealthy and elegant. Grand Hotels were the kinds of places haunted by itinerant aristocrats, or which served as landing pads for movie stars as they flitted from metropolis to metropolis. They were “homes away from home” for those who could pay enough to feel at home anywhere in the world – hence Kringelein’s willingness to gamble away the remainder of his life (figuratively and literally) at the baccarat tables and the bar. Furthermore, top-flight hotels were highly representative of what was “modern.” The very first shot of *Grand Hotel* is an overhead pan across the establishment’s switchboard operators relentlessly answering and connecting calls. Likewise, we are introduced immediately thereafter

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Kennedy, *Edmund Goulding’s Dark Victory*, 108.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

to the motivations and personalities of Kringelein, Preysing, Grusinskaya, and Gaigern – and given a foreshadowing of their intertwined destinies – by seeing and hearing them use the hotel’s telephone cabinets. The characters congregate in a busy bar serving American cocktail concoctions and entertained by big-band foxtrots. Aesthetically, the building itself is defined by sharp Art Deco lines and curves. This Jazz Age character was mimicked by Hungarian and Austrian “hotel movies” that were to some extent indebted to *Grand Hotel*, such as *Bál a savoyban/Ball im Savoy* (1935), *Hotel Kikelet* (1937), and *Egér a palotában* (1942).

## 5.2 MOVIE-GOING AS VIRTUAL VACATION

Perhaps it was because cinematic representations of Grand Hotels resonated with the experience of movie-going itself that they proved such congenial subjects and settings. For many people, the cinema, like the hotel, offered a special space apart from everyday life. Three of the auditorium walls segregated the viewer from the world outside, enclosing him/her in a space that, if for technical reasons alone, had to contain its own controlled environment. The fourth wall, which was covered by the screen or was itself the screen, directed the spectator’s vision into a conceptually endless virtual space: a “window to another world.”<sup>9</sup> If we understand film + cinema space to be a complete ensemble, we reveal that the third function of hotel movies was to act as a kind of *actual* vacation, unfolding in circumstances that, on a certain level, were very much like vacations resulting from *actual* travel. Thus movies – and perhaps especially movies

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<sup>9</sup> Daniel Morat, “Das Kino,” in *Orte der Moderne: Erfahrungswelten des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Alexa Geisthövel and Habbo Knoch (Frankfurt and New York: Campus Verlag, 2005), 231.



about hotels – created cheap ersatz retreats for those who could scarcely imagine ever being capable of enjoying the real thing.

Contemporaries spoke about movie-going in a way that suggests that this reflected their experience. Many of the entrants in the 1923-1924 *Wiener Kino* contest asking “Why Do I Go to the Movies?” (see Chapter 1) said that they went to the movies in order to forget everyday life. Their submissions suggest that the cinema represented for them a place where they could temporarily unburden themselves of the work, poverty, and boredom that defined the basic conditions of their existence.<sup>10</sup> Contestant “Friedl” expressed that she went to the cinema “to see something unknown, to get to know strange parts of the Earth, to marvel at the performance of talented people and to get to forget about the outside world.”<sup>11</sup> Louis Mair, channeling the Gospels, offered his reasons: “1. To forget for two short hours that we are poor. 2. To marvel at the beautiful world on the screen, which God created for everyone, but which, because of money, is shut off from the poor.”<sup>12</sup> The entry that won the million-Kronen prize, written by the notably genderless “Sehnsucht” [Desire, or Longing], professed something along these same lines. “Longingful [*Sehnsuchtsvolle*] dreams become reality: far-away cities, beauty, intellect [*Geist*], riches. For hours on end, I forget that I am poor and miserable.”<sup>13</sup> Still others regarded the cinema as a way to enjoy comforts absent in their own accommodations. Johanna Wojtech wrote

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<sup>10</sup> These citations all derive from *Wiener Kino* and mark the number of the entry and the name/pseudonym of the contestant, followed by the issue in which the entry appears: Nr. 2, Margareten 125, vol. 2, no. 3 (1923); Nr. 4, Annys, vol. 2, no. 1 (1924); Nr. 6, J. Cuchal and Nr. 15, Anna U., *ibid.*; Nr. 23, Dr. Th. Vertés, vol. 2, no. 2; Nr. 24, Fr. A. Pieler, *ibid.*; Nr. 27, Fritz Krakora, vol. 2, no. 3; Nr. 31, Karoline K. and Nr. 33, Karl Wonesch, *ibid.*; Nr. 54, Marie Metz, vol. 2, no. 4; Nr. 59, Johann Schovcsik, *ibid.*; Nr. 63, Sehnsucht, vol. 2, no. 5; Nr. 64, Paula Dürnberg, Nr. 66, Hans Buchhammer, Nr. 67, Caroline Zauchinger, Nr. 69, Reichhelm, and Nr. 74., Viktoria, *ibid.*; Nr. 89, Louis Mair, vol. 2, no. 7; Nr. 95, F. Sigmund and Nr. 97, Franz Weis, St. Pölten, vol. 2, no. 8.

<sup>11</sup> “Warum gehe ich ins Kino?": Nr. 26 (Friedl), *Wiener Kino* 2, No. 3 (1924): 8.

<sup>12</sup> “Warum gehe ich ins Kino?": Nr. 89 (Louis Mair), *Wiener Kino* 2, No. 7 (1924): 8.

<sup>13</sup> “Warum gehe ich ins Kino?": Nr. 63 (Sehnsucht), *Wiener Kino* 2, No. 5 (1924): 8.

that “a 70-year-old woman goes to the movies to warm herself cheaply, because she is freezing at home, and also to delight herself with the nice love-dramas for a short while.”<sup>14</sup>

Even in the midst of civil war, movie-going was able to offer the comfort of being in a world apart. Vienna was a dangerous place during the February 1934 suppression of the Republikanischer Schützbund uprising by federal Austrian troops and paramilitaries, but this did not prevent the writer Hilde Spiel from seeking respite at the cinema. She noted in her calendar that on February 16, 1934 she went (with her future ideological enemy, Friedrich Torberg) to see “Greta Garbo in the original English-language version of *Grand Hotel*.” In her memoirs, she recalled this moment as an “island of peace.”<sup>15</sup> A fitting outcome, indeed, for a film often remembered for a line from the washed-up ballerina Grusinskaya: “I want to be alone.”

But, just as Garbo’s character experienced, hotels were also natural spaces for intimacy, often of the kind that could not be expressed in full sunlight or familiar social circumstances. The same held true for the film auditorium. A moviegoer bought access to darkness and anonymity with his or her ticket, which, with luck, would create conditions similar (or similar enough) to a private room. Cinemas shared with hotels (and train compartments and shipboard cabins) an association with sexual license. From the perspective of the guardians of civic order and respectability, this was a vexatious problem. Who could tell what trouble the uneducated masses might get into with the lights off?

For popular film magazines, however, it provided fodder for countless jokes and cartoons that winked at the idea that moviegoers harbored ulterior motives for being out at the pictures. One cartoon from *Wiener Kino* from 1924 has us peer down a row of seats in a cinema. A fellow

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<sup>14</sup> “Warum gehe ich ins Kino?": Nr. 48 (Johanna Wojtech), *Wiener Kino* 2, No. 4 (1924): 2.

<sup>15</sup> Hilde Spiel, *The Dark and the Bright: Memoirs 1911-1989*, trans. Christine Shuttleworth (Riverside, CA: Ariadne, 2007), 69.

on the far left stands in for the viewer, as he turns his head rightward to behold a file of kissing and embracing – and failed – couples.<sup>16</sup> The Viennese *Mein Film* relied very often on photomontage, both as illustration for its film-and-celeb exposés and as a vehicle for satire. An instance of the latter from 1935 riffed on moviegoers’ use of the cinema as a cover for enjoying something other than motion picture magic. It pokes ironic fun at the notion that a male viewer’s amorous plans for a film with his date could be foiled by competition from the ostensible purpose for being in a cinema to begin with: the visual attractions (so to speak) of the film itself. The couple, hand-drawn, sits in the foreground; in the background, the “screen,” framing a photo of Clark Gable leaning in for a kiss with an unnamed blonde. So reads the caption:

[Man:] The one thing I’ll say to you, baby, is that I’ll never go to a Clark Gable film with you ever again!

[Woman:] Yeah, so why not?

[Man:] Because you keep staring at the screen all the time! Do you really think that’s why I went to the movies with you?!?<sup>17</sup>

Interwar “hotel movies,” then, offered filmgoers a chance to experience the cinematic surrogate of pleasant or thrilling spaces in an environment that replicated some of their most crucial and attractive features. Consequently, movies not only reflected the ways in which hotels already were places separate from the “real world” or symbols of free movement and longings

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<sup>16</sup> The image is a cartoon by the artist L. Dömény, “Es wird Licht” [The Lights Come On]. Printed in *Wiener Kino* 2, no. 4 [1924]: 6.

<sup>17</sup> Cartoon by Kóra; printed in *Mein Film*, Nr. 473 (1935): 13. The original German reads: “Das eine sag’ ich dir, Maus, ich geh’ nie mehr mit dir zu einem Clark Gable-Film!” “Ja, warum den nicht?” “Weil du immerfort auf die Leinwand starrst! Glaubst du, ich geh’ deswegen mit dir ins Kino?!?”

fulfilled; they amplified them, reinforced them, and reproduced them. Understanding this context makes it easier to explore how it was that two real-life hotels, the Palace Hotel (Palotaszálló) at Lillafüred in Hungary and the White Horse (Weißes Rössl) in St. Wolfgang, Austria, emerged in the 1920s and 1930s as sites invested with cultural significance beyond their status as “mere” buildings full of rooms for rent. Each in its own fashion came to be seen as emblematic of the questions and problems facing the post-imperial societies that enveloped them. At the same time, however, their representations in text and cinema lifted them into the realm of fantasy, exalting them as places where solutions to actual, intractable problems could be found, or where those problems could be simply wished away.

### **5.3 IN LILLAFÜRED DID ISTVÁN BETHLEN A STATE-RUN PLEASURE- DOME DECREE**

Interwar Budapest, like any European metropolis worthy of the name, had its share of grand hotels. On the promenade of the Danube’s eastern bank massed a row of cosmopolitan, aristocratic establishments: the Grand Hotel Hungaria, the Dunapalota Ritz, the Bristol, and the Carlton; deeper into Pest were nestled the Pannonia, the Royal, and the Astoria, whose name still graces the “square” and Metro station at its feet.<sup>18</sup> The city’s great icon of the period, though, stood (and still stands) on the western bank, at the head of the Szabádság Bridge. Begun in wartime and completed in the inauspicious year 1918, the Saint Gellért Hotel spanned the divide between Budapest’s belle époque confidence and post-imperial redefinition. Its Art Nouveau

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<sup>18</sup> Géza Herczeg, *Das Buch von Ungarn und Budapest* (Munich: R. Piper & Co., 1928), 18–24.

style, strongly flavored by orientalist flair hinting at “Eastern” opulence in a modernist vocabulary, was a late push from the architectural currents that famously had shaped Habsburg cityscapes at the turn of the century.<sup>19</sup>

But the fact that the main attraction of the Gellért was its thermal baths made it the natural cornerstone of the interwar campaign to brand Budapest as the world’s premier “Spa City,” and indeed it served as the anchor of plans (never realized) to transform the Gellért Hill/Tabán area into a single vast resort complex.<sup>20</sup> Exciting new technological wonders augmented the serene, exquisitely-decorated elegance of the hot baths when, in 1926, Hungary’s first wave pool was added to the Gellért’s patio. Now it could appeal to more than wealthy hotel guests or medically-minded bathers of a certain age; it grabbed a bit of youthful, jazzy credibility with a machine that provided “modern” entertainment, and was rewarded with a prominent scene in the 1932 German-Hungarian co-production *...und es leuchtet die Puszta* (...and the Plain is Gleaming), starring Rosy Bársony and Wolf Albach-Retty.<sup>21</sup> The scene, shot on location and therefore particularly attractive to audiences accustomed to studio sets, has little to do with the plot, which was very loosely adapted from Kálmán Mikszáth’s novel *A vén gazember* (The Old Scoundrel). As the main segment of a montage of post-card-type city scenes, set to a song

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<sup>19</sup> See the chapter on Art Nouveau in Ákos Moravánszky, *Competing Visions: Aesthetic Invention and Social Imagination in Central European Architecture, 1867-1918* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1998), 105–149. Moravánszky does not discuss the Gellért Hotel – perhaps because of its postwar completion – but his text provides a good empire-wide panorama of general trends.

<sup>20</sup> András Sipos, *A jövő Budapestje, 1930-1940: Városfejlesztési programok és rendezési tervek* (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2011); Alexander Vari, “From ‘Paris of the East’ to ‘Queen of the Danube’: International Models in the Promotion of Budapest Tourism, 1885-1940,” in *Touring Beyond the Nation: A Transnational Approach to European Tourism History*, ed. Eric G.E. Zuelow (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), 103–26.

<sup>21</sup> For more on the history of the film’s production: Chris Wahl, “‘Paprika in the Blood’: On UFA’s Early Sound Films Produced In/about/for/with Hungary,” *Spectator* 27, no. 2 (2007): 11–20. It must be said, however, that Wahl has been misled that the German version (as opposed to the Hungarian) of the film is lost, for it is precisely that version which is today most readily available for purchase by English-speaking audiences, e.g. on [www.rarefilmsandmore.com](http://www.rarefilmsandmore.com).

proclaiming “Hurrah, Budapest,” the Gellért pool’s screen moment is unabashed tourism propaganda (with some tap-dancing thrown in).

The most celebrated, most controversial, and most symbol-rich hotel in post-imperial Hungary, however, was 133 km (83 mi) northeast of the capital city. Perched in the Bükk Hills, a short but winding trip west from Miskolc, the Lillafüred Palotaszálló (Palace Hotel) was built in 1929 to be the flagship enterprise of the Hungarian tourism industry. By the early 1940s, its cultural and political significance had proved far more compelling than its performance in this role. From its earliest days – and partly, indeed, by design – the Palotaszálló embodied multiple ideological agendas, and perhaps existed more vividly as the object of myth and mystique than as an economic entity. A remarkable number of layers of fantasy were not only placed *onto* the resort by means of the press and popular cinema, but were also built *into* its very design. Lillafüred, and above all its grand hotel, was a citadel of substitution, a way of making impossible and barely-possible dreams come true. It was, in a sense, something not too far off from the Bavarian king Ludwig II’s famous Neuschwanstein, but for an age of cinema and frustrated post-imperial nationalism.

The area called “Lillafüred” refers geographically to a small portion of what is today the commune of Hámor in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County. It resides on state lands in Bükk National Park. In the interwar era, these lands were owned by the royal Hungarian treasury and administered by the Forestry Bureau of the Ministry of Agriculture. While it had attracted the attention of Romantic wanderers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (most notably the poet and nationalist Sándor Petőfi), and a small network of private villas had sprouted from the 1870s onward, it was not until the 1890s that the government laid plans to transform the region into a tourist

destination.<sup>22</sup> In that decade (it is not clear precisely when), the state erected a two-story hotel and restaurant on the shore of Lake Hámor, and around the same time the area got its title, granted in honor of Borsod County Lord Lieutenant (*főispán*) Elemér Vay's daughter, nicknamed Lilla ("füred" signifies a place for bathing).<sup>23</sup> As yet, however, the nascent Lillafüred was a distant understudy to the larger and more popular complex at Tátralomnic (today's Tatranská Lomnica in Slovakia). There, in the High Tatra Mountains, the state constructed in 1903-1905 a hotel boasting 120 rooms to spur development of Hungary's capacity for alpine tourism.<sup>24</sup> As it turned out, of course, the crown would not have long to reap the rewards of its investment.

The Treaty of Trianon placed the High Tatras beyond the grasp of the Hungarian tourism industry. Lillafüred, and the Bükk Hills more generally, was suddenly the closest remnant of Hungary's northern alpine landscape – a fact that the Bethlen government did not fail to notice. Serious plans for developing Lillafüred began to take shape in the early 1920s, but the government waited to act on them until state finances were, at least ostensibly, in a position to take on such a large project. Years of war and political volatility, not to mention a global economic recession, had conspired to trigger a spiral of hyperinflation of Hungarian – and, for that matter, Austrian – currency. The korona went from 4.93 to \$1 in 1919 to 80,460 to \$1 in April 1924, the nadir of its postwar value.<sup>25</sup> In 1922 the League of Nations coordinated the "financial reconstruction" of Austria through a pool of international loans; the apparent success of this operation, the first of its kind, formed the basis of a similar one for Hungary starting two years later. Although later historians have cast significant doubt on the true economic efficacy of

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<sup>22</sup> István Dobrossy, *A Palotaszálló és Lillafüred 75 éve* (Miskolc: Lézerpont Stúdió, 2006), 15, 22.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 22–23. Vay was the *főispán* from 1896 to 1904 and again from 1910-1912.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>25</sup> R.L. Bidwell, *Currency Conversion Tables: A Hundred Years of Change* (London: Rex Collings, 1970), 27.

the League's loan programs (further loans were issued to Greece, Bulgaria, and the Free City of Danzig), they tended to be happy windfalls of liquid capital – and political legitimacy – for the national government that got to cash the checks.<sup>26</sup> Hungary's League-administered loan amounted to 25 million koronas and paved the way for the introduction of a new currency in 1925, the pengő, set at a much lower rate of international exchange.<sup>27</sup>

The loan (and even just the prospect of its arrival) allowed for several other major internal and international loans, the upshot being that no later than 1925-26 funds were available for the construction of a state-owned resort at Lillafüred.<sup>28</sup> By the summer of 1926, the public had knowledge of the project. In one explanation of its grand capital investment plan, the government announced the allocation of “1,000,000 gold crowns [*aranykorona*]<sup>29</sup> for the construction of the hotel at Lillafüred” with the simple (and somewhat question-begging) rationale that “...at this time the country has no climatic spa location, [and] Lillafüred is the only place where the conditions necessary for a climatic spa can be found.”<sup>30</sup> The ultimate cost, however, climbed to a total much higher than this hopelessly optimistic projection. Around 3.5 million pengős of state money went into building the facility itself, which does not count the 266,000 pengős sunk into embarrassingly futile attempts to drill for a non-existent thermal spring beneath the hotel.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Zara Steiner, *The Lights That Failed: European International History 1919-1933* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 282–283. Steiner, a non-specialist in the region, avers that Hungary's loan money went largely to “unproductive enterprises” and towards the payment of other debts. Miklós Lojkó, focusing specifically on Hungary, essentially concurs. Miklós Lojkó, *Meddling in Middle Europe: Britain and the “Lands Between,” 1919-1925* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2006), 130.

<sup>27</sup> C.A. Macartney, *Hungary and Her Successors: The Treaty of Trianon and Its Consequences, 1919-1937* (London, New York, and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1937), 465.

<sup>28</sup> Dobrossy, *A Palotaszálló és Lillafüred 75 éve.*, 74-75. For an exhaustive international history of the League loan, consult Zoltán Peterecz, *Jeremiah Smith, Jr. and Hungary, 1924-1926: The United States, the League of Nations, and the Financial Reconstruction of Hungary* (London: Versita, 2013).

<sup>29</sup> This was the currency of Hungary from 1900 until the introduction of the pengő in 1927.

<sup>30</sup> “A beruházási program,” *Budapesti Hírlap*, July 26, 1926: 2.

<sup>31</sup> Dobrossy, *A Palotaszálló és Lillafüred 75 éve*, 74.



It was impossible that a government prestige project of this magnitude and visibility could fail to attract both unremitting critics and zealous defenders, and indeed opposing camps gathered from the moment that news broke. For years, Lillafüred was the target of sustained attacks from Bethlen's opposition in the National Assembly and in the press. The most vocal came from the Social Democrats and their paper, *Népszava*. From the socialists' perspective, Lillafüred epitomized perfectly the repressive, retrograde arrogance of the oligarchs who had seized power in the post-1919 counterrevolution. They viewed the resort as an outrageous extravagance in an era of national poverty, as it was infinitely better to direct the proceeds of the massive international loans towards providing for the Hungarian people's basic necessities. For example, upon hearing the "joy" that the news of Lillafüred had brought to Minister of Defense Károly Csáky in 1926, *Népszava* countered bitterly that the occasion was not one for happiness. "... [As] long as the homeless saunter the streets, working people in their thousands cram and hide in abysmal hovels, and the endless line of desperate folk seeks death by its own hand [*sic*], there is no cause for joy and with every vacation-season frivolity there is a need to feel *cynical* that from the billions in the budget they want to rip out a large portion for the construction of Lillafüred – and *the expansion of the rich man's vacation options – instead of for housing...*"<sup>32</sup>

Time and again, Lillafüred's socialist detractors used it as a shorthand for the character of the government itself: it was the kind of mirage-chasing vanity project typically hatched by the Unity Party machine and inanely accepted by a servile gentry and bourgeoisie.<sup>33</sup> It was, in the words of one article, "*genuine, one-hundred-percent Bethleniana.*"<sup>34</sup> (For Bethlen's socialist

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<sup>32</sup> "Lillafüred és a szocialista képviselők öröme," *Népszava*, July 13, 1926: 11.

<sup>33</sup> On the "servility" of Bethlen's supporters in the National Assembly: "Ha nem bizunk az utókorban, mi magunk tegyük magunkat halhatatlanná," *Népszava*, July 7, 1927: 8.

<sup>34</sup> "Lillafüred, a Talbot-ügy, a gyufamonopólium, a tőzsdei botrányok és a szövetzeketi dzsungel rejtelmek," *Népszava*, October 18, 1928: 1.

critics, the failed drilling project conveniently added a delectable element of incompetence to the apparent boondoggle; related examples of perfidy included the installation of Collegia Hungaricae in foreign capitals.<sup>35</sup>) But while socialists may have been most especially inclined to excoriate a government they deeply distrusted (not to say detested), they were not the only members of the opposition to decry Lillafüred as the premier example of wastefulness. Politicians from the Smallholders' Party, which represented the interests of the middle to lower strata of the landowning peasantry, also used the resort as a cudgel to attack Bethlen and his cabinet in parliamentary debates.<sup>36</sup> Károly Rassay, a conservative MP from the Democrat Party inveighed against the Bethlen government's "general wastefulness," charging that "*Lillafüred* cannot be the middle class's resort: the middle class needs jobs and bread."<sup>37</sup> Beyond the realm of party politics, there is evidence suggesting that in its early days (particularly 1927-28) Lillafüred was the object of pop-culture mockery, rather than the glamorous dream palace it became. The late man of letters Jenő Rákosi was some time later quoted as reflecting on the "drumfire assault" Bethlen and his project had withstood at this time. "In the National Assembly, in the satirical papers, and on the cabaret stages, everyone spoke of Lillafüred – and slandered it."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> "Milyen beruházásokra fordították az adózókból kiperéselt fölöslegeket?" *Népszava*, September 27, 1928: 3.

<sup>36</sup> *Az 1927. évi január hó 25-ére hirdetett Országgyűlés Képviselőházának naplója*, vol. X (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1928), 64–65.

<sup>37</sup> "Házszabályrevízió, a nagykaniszlai választás és külpolitikai kérdések: Rassay Károly beszéde a demokrata pártban," *Budapesti Hírlap*, October 20, 1928: 6.

<sup>38</sup> This was apparently true also in nearby Miskolc, where "even competent people were inclined to be more skeptical than proud" of the undertaking. Jenő Rákosi, "Rákosi Jenő Lillafüredről," *Lillafüredi Fürdőújság* 1, no. 5-6 (1933): 11.

## 5.4 LILLAFÜRED AND THE FANTASIES OF UNDOING OR RELIVING THE NATIONAL PAST

The arguments that Lillafüred's supporters brought to bear in its defense were not only more numerous, but also reveal more of the post-imperial historical moment, than the negative reactions of its foes. One was an argument from economic necessity: namely that the loss of both Upper Hungary (Slovakia), Transylvania, and the Adriatic seacoast through the Treaty of Trianon had robbed Hungary of its best and most developed vacation areas, and therefore that, in order to survive in a ruthless international market, the Hungarian tourism industry urgently needed high-quality replacements.<sup>39</sup>

In this capacity, Lillafüred's boosters interpreted the resort to execute two roles. First and foremost, it was to be in essence a subalpine reincarnation of the Palace Hotel at Tátralomnic. It is a telling sign of how seriously the government took this charge, if we note that the Palotaszálló's first director, József Marchal, had previously run the Palace Hotel at Tátralomnic.<sup>40</sup> Even the silverware and serving vessels from of the senior institution that still remained in Hungarian hands were eventually pressed into service at Lillafüred.<sup>41</sup>

Second, contemporary observers sometimes referred to Lillafüred in a way suggestive of its role as a substitute to, or at least an analogue of, prestigious resorts abroad – and more specifically in Austria. By 1928, Lillafüred seems to have gained the epithet of “the Hungarian Semmering,” i.e. Hungary's counterpart to that cluster of luxury hotels on the very eastern tip of

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<sup>39</sup> Emil Borbély-Maczky, “Minden magyar jöjjön és ismerek meg Lillafüredet,” *Lillafüredi Fürdőújság* 1, no. 3-4 (1933): 1.

<sup>40</sup> “Kinvezeték Lillafüred igazgatóját,” *Budapesti Hírlap*, April 24, 1930: 7. There seems to have been some contemporary confusion on the proper way to spell Marchal's name, as here, which wrote it “Marschall.” For further commentary on this, see Dobrossy, *A Palotaszálló és Lillafüred 75 éve*, 111.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

the Alps within easy reach of Vienna.<sup>42</sup> One suspects that promoters making this comparison intended not only to give a cosmopolitan shine to Lillafüred's reputation, but (probably more to the point) to convince Hungarians that they had no need to cross the border when they could experience the high-society charms of Semmering right at home. The "alpine mystique," crowed one commenter, was now available a mere three hours and twenty minutes from downtown Budapest. No passport was necessary, and all one needed to haul was a sleeping shirt in their single zipper-bag.<sup>43</sup>

It is clear, however, that Lillafüred's designers and supporters imagined it as a surrogate Tátralomnic out of more than purely economic reasons. In their minds the territorial losses of 1920 demanded not only a functional replacement, but indeed a monumental project that would memorialize the stolen lands and alleviate the pain of the national trauma that had severed them from the homeland. Lillafüred would stand as both a perpetual reminder of a better past and as the departure point towards a better future. As the politician and active irredentist Emil Nagy enjoined, speaking on the deleterious effects of Trianon on Hungarian values, "We cannot allow it to be that the consequence [of losing these territories] is simply to mourn for what is missing; but rather, as a healthy nation, desiring to live on, one that wishes to solve correctly the moral

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<sup>42</sup> Examples of this habit can be found in a variety of sources. In the socialist daily press: Gy. B., "Egy fényes állami üdülőtelep árnyékai," *Népszava*, April 22, 1928: 7; in the Lillafüred house journal: Jób Paál, "Őszinte sorok Patat Lajosról és Lillafüredről," *Lillafüredi Fürdőújság* 1, no. 7 (1933): 8; in the popular film press: "Pereg a film," *Déliab* 8, no. 35 (August 25, 1934): 56; and on the radio, viz. the broadcast listing for a program called "A 'felfedezett' Mátra" in *Déliab* 8, no. 44 (October 27, 1934): 45. It may be of interest to observe that Lillafüred was but one in a line of "Hungarian Semmerings" going back at least to the 1880s – albeit, perhaps, the most illustrious. This dignity was offered by the same publication to the railway route between Budapest and Ruttká/Vrútky (today in Slovakia) as well as to the area around Oravica/Oravița (after 1880 Oravicabánya) in the Banat (today in Romania). "Körmöczbánya veszedelme," *Vasárnapi Újság*, January 11, 1880: 25; "Orsova és az aninai vasút," *Vasárnapi Újság*, September 12, 1880: 614. Up to and beyond the completion of interwar Lillafüred, the Hungarian press compared numerous other locations to Semmering: the necessary criteria seemed to have been that the place be vaguely alpine, relaxing, suited to the touristic endeavors of the middle class – or that it be railway line cut through mountains. Only circa 1928 does Lillafüred seem to have entered – and stayed in – this crowded field. The earliest search result for "Magyar Semmer\*" in the Arcanum Digitheca periodicals database (<http://adtplus.arcanum.hu/>; accessed May 21, 2015) that names Lillafüred is from April 22, 1928.

<sup>43</sup> Zoltán Losonczy, "Téli látogatás Lillafüred csodavölgyében," *Budapesti Hírlap*, January 27, 1929: 6.

problem of Trianon, *to turn ourselves, in the absence of Lomnic, towards Lillafüred.*”<sup>44</sup> That the political power of anti-Trianon sentiments remained tremendous and durable throughout the era indicates that such attempts to find simulacra for lost sites brought no lasting resolution. But at least one contemporary, the newspaperman and “exiled” Transylvanian Artúr P. Vákár, was swayed to reflect on his 1929 visit to the still under-construction resort that it was a place where “the Upper Hungarian landscape captivated and the balsam-scented Transylvanian breeze soothed.”<sup>45</sup>



**Figure 8. Eastern side of the Palace Hotel, Lillafüred, as shown on a postcard ca. 1930**

<sup>44</sup> Emil Nagy, “A mi nagy problémánk,” *Budapesti Hírlap*, May 23, 1926: 2. Nagy had served as Minister of Justice under Bethlen from 1922-1924, but left the Unity Party in 1924. Ágnes Kenyeres, ed., “Nagy Emil,” *Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon, 1000-1990*, n.d., <http://mek.oszk.hu/00300/00355/html/>.

<sup>45</sup> Artúr P. Vákár, “Felvidéki táj, erdélyi levegő,” *Budapesti Hírlap*, October 2, 1929: 6. The biographical information on Vákár comes from Dávid Gyula, “Vákár P. Artúr,” *Romániai magyar irodalmi lexikon* (Bucharest and Kolozsvár: Kriterion, 2010), <http://lexikon.kriterion.ro/szavak/4905/>.

The architects and engineers who authored Lillafüred did not leave it up to the imagination to discern its purpose as an irredentist monument. This was built directly and conspicuously into the hotel's exterior and interior appearance. Architect Kálmán Lux's design (Figure 8 above) invoked elements of Late Medieval (or "Renaissance") fortresses, specifically from the era of Matthias I (Mátyás I; better known as Matthias Corvinus, 1443-1490), whom mainstream historical memory in Hungary lauded as having guided Hungary through its greatest Golden Age.<sup>46</sup> This reflected not only Lux's earlier career experience in restoring a number of "real" historical castles and monuments, or the notion that the hotel grounds themselves supposedly enjoyed a connection to Matthias, as it was rumored that he had "vacationed" in the area.<sup>47</sup> Because Matthias I came from a Transylvanian noble house, and because the apex of his reign was a period of Hungarian hegemony in east-central Europe, it was also a rather pointed allusion to Magyar dominion over Transylvania and Upper Hungary. The titles given to the grandest and most sumptuous spaces in the hotel further honed this message. The hotel's main restaurant honored Matthias Corvinus and the smaller restaurant, used mainly for special occasions, was named after his father, John Hunyadi (ca. 1406-1456), voivode of Transylvania and regent of Hungary.<sup>48</sup> (Today the names of the rooms are switched.) The father of a somewhat lesser Golden Age (but nonetheless a symbol of Hungarian geopolitical power), the Angevin king Louis I "the Great" (1326-1382), who ruled over Hungary, Croatia, and later Poland, received an

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<sup>46</sup> Both Hungarian and Romanian nationalist discourses have claimed Matthias as their "own," although this modern, anachronistic distinction almost certainly would not have made sense to a medieval noble. The most neutral naming convention is to refer to him by the Latin form of his regal and honorific names, Matthias Corvinus, or "Matthew the Raven," which derived from his personal crest.

<sup>47</sup> On Lux: Dobrossy, *A Palotaszálló és Lillafüred 75 éve*, 30–31; on Matthias I: "Európa a Bükkben," *Budapesti Hírlap*, June 7, 1930: 7.

<sup>48</sup> As with Matthias I, Hunyadi's national belonging remains contested. In Hungarian literature he is known as János Hunyadi, and in Romanian as Ioan de Hunedoara. In the interests of neutrality I refer to him by the Anglicized version of his forename, John, but, for the sake of clarity, prefer Hunyadi as the name of his house.

all-purpose salon. The interior details and furniture of all these spaces were calculated to look and feel Late Medieval, palatial and “princely.”<sup>49</sup>

The irredentist intent of the Palace Hotel’s design was conveyed perhaps most candidly of all by a series of nine stained glass windows installed in the walls of the Hunyadi Room.<sup>50</sup> Each one consisted of a central pane depicting a representative structure or monument of a city or fortress. Above this pane was the heraldic crest of that place, and on the flanks were intricate folk-art motifs. Below the central image was a rhyming couplet with some manner of dramatic patriotic message – more specifically a call to the viewer to remember the significance of that place in Hungarian national history and/or to remember that it was currently under foreign control. Each city or castle represented was either in Romanian Transylvania or Slovakia: a casualty of Trianon and a captive of hostile forces.<sup>51</sup> (The connection to Matthias I was bolstered still further by a “triptych” of windows in the wall of the landing of the grand staircase, which featured the king and his Queen, Beatrix, on a royal hunt.) Artúr Vákár summed up the emotional effect of the Palotaszálló’s design strategy, writing that “the Palace Hotel’s interior is spectacle and history – Hungarian spectacle and Hungarian history. [...] History speaks down from the walls and the colorful windows. The time of King Mátyás, sire of precious Kolozsvár [Cluj], comes alive on the walls and speaks to us about the windows. Nine windows; nine histories tells the wall.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Dobrossy, *A Palotaszálló és Lillafüred 75 éve*, 66.

<sup>50</sup> All of these can be referenced in rich full-color plates in *Ibid.*, 178–180.

<sup>51</sup> These were, in Romania: Kolozsvár (Cluj), Vajdahunyad (Hunedoara), and Brassó (Braşov); in Slovakia: Árva Castle (Orava); Bártfa (Bardejov); Kassa (Košice); Késmárk (Kežmarok), Lőcse (Levoča), and Pozsony (Bratislava).

<sup>52</sup> Artúr P. Vákár, “Felvidéki táj, erdélyi levegő,” *Budapesti Hírlap*, October 2, 1929: 6. Vákár was particularly keen to point out the Slovakian locations as strongholds of anti-Habsburg (Kuruc) resistance in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries – as well as the “havoc” that the Czechs had supposedly wrought in the region.

## 5.5 LILLAFÜRED AS SOCIAL AND NATIONAL GOOD

Another argument that Lillafüred's champions mobilized in its favor was the contention that the resort was not a mere luxury, but a force for the improvement of Hungarian society. They defended the construction of the resort against charges of government waste by emphasizing it as a public works project that gave jobs to thousands of their countrymen.<sup>53</sup> They heralded Lillafüred as the "pride of our mutilated homeland" and a unique demonstration of Hungarian artistry and ingenuity. As such, Lillafüred became something of a totem for national confidence.<sup>54</sup> Thus the fulsome reverence paid by Emil Borbély-Maczky, Lord Lieutenant of Borsod-Gömör-Kishont County, in the resort's house newspaper:

At eventide, if they were to light the lamps in the great hotel, it would be as if every window were a spotlight, whose light-beams blaze above the lake like a fiery advertisement. This advertisement, however, is an enchanting truth: it lives, buzzes, and illuminates, and within its walls the multitudes of guests make merry, enjoy themselves, and rest. If, as we walk along the lakeshore, we glance up at this architectural masterpiece bathing in the light of innumerable stars, we must feel proud and superior – we must, for we feel unflagging strength in ourselves at the knowledge that **we, the Hungarians, built**

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<sup>53</sup> "Mit jelent Lillafüred építése Miskolc és környékének közgazdasági életében," *Budapesti Hírlap*, June 9, 1929: 12; Lajos Horánszky, "Bethlen István útja," *Budapesti Hírlap*, March 19, 1933. The former held that 3,373,000 pengő went into the construction of the resort and claims that 1,552,540 (46 percent of the total) ended up in the hands of local workers.

<sup>54</sup> "A lillafüredi Palota-szállót a magyar tudás, akarat és a magyar iparos nagy felkészültsége teszi csonka hazánk büszkeségévé," *Lillafüredi Fürdőújság* 1, no. 3-4 (1933): 17.



**this.** Because Lillafüred is ours, as much ours as the flour ground from homegrown wheat, or as the bread baked from that flour!<sup>55</sup>

It followed, then, that a place as marvelous, as Hungarian *tout court* as Lillafüred would grant a boon to the domestic tourism industry, and thus raise a bastion of resistance against the flight of Hungarian vacationers to other countries. As we have seen in Chapters 3 and 4, tourism promoters exalted the preservation of intra-national travel as a form of activism; Lillafüred was preservation at its most majestic. This sentiment is palpable in Bertalan Illyés's foreword to his guidebook, *Lillafüred and Its Surroundings*: "If this little guide drums up even only a few friends for Lillafüred, who do not take precious, never-to-be-recovered Hungarian money out of the country, but rather summer right here, then this slight volume will not be a work of my wasted effort."<sup>56</sup>

Perhaps the most unexpected defense articulated among Lillafüred's most fervent admirers was their frequent – but cagy – insistence that its advent had at last given wide swaths of Hungarian society access to the joys of elegant vacationing. This was no democratic urge, however. The champions of Lillafüred expressed no evident desire to extend the well-appointed lifestyle of the Grand Hotel to urban workers, much less peasant farmers. For though they often employed circumlocution or alluded to (probably intentionally) fuzzy social categories, they certainly had in mind some version of the "middle class."<sup>57</sup> Their definition of the middle class

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<sup>55</sup> Emphases in the original. Emil Borbély-Maczky, "Minden magyar jöjjön és ismerek meg Lillafüredet," *Lillafüredi Fürdőújság* 1, no. 3-4 (1933): 1.

<sup>56</sup> Bertalan Illyés, *Lillafüred és környéke: Utikalauz turisták, nyaralók részére* (Miskolc: Ifj. Ludvig és Janovits Könyvnyomdája, 1930), 3. More emphatic still is the strangely Hajj-like command issued in *Lillafüred Spa News*: "Wherever your fate takes you, once in your life you must see **Your Homeland's most beautiful place: Lillafüred!**" (Boldface and capitalization as in the original.) "Amit Lillafüredről mindenkinek tudni kell," *Lillafüredi Fürdőújság* 1, no. 3-4 (1933): 8.

<sup>57</sup> Dobrossy, *A Palotaszálló és Lillafüred 75 éve*, 31.

by and large consisted of those of a certain cultural disposition who were inclined towards (and worthy of) the four-star amenities in an Arcadian setting, but who could neither afford them, nor were members of the aristocracy, nor, presumably, were unpatriotic enough to seek bargains in neighboring countries. Put simply, Lillafüred would contribute to the betterment of Hungarian social relations by providing, alongside a handful of Balaton shore towns, “upscale exclusivity” to a middle class that was itself otherwise excluded.<sup>58</sup>

The way that Lillafüred’s boosters expressed this mission, however, reveals that broader public conceptions figured the resort to be an expensive place. *Lillafüred Spa News* was particularly sensitive to this apparently widely-held notion.<sup>59</sup> It offered a platform for hotel director Lajos Patat to reassure readers that in his establishment “everyone finds the entertainment milieu appropriate to their social circles [*viszonyaik*] ...[T]hose in the bourgeois [*polgári*] restaurants of the Hunyadi Hall will find **simple bourgeois entertainment and relaxation**. It isn’t true that only luxury guests can enjoy themselves, because modest demands find satisfaction in the cheap prices of the Hunyadi Restaurant, where the guests may receive the same excellent fare as in the elevated Mátyás Room.”<sup>60</sup> The paper’s editor-in-chief, Imre Soltész, went so far as to call Lillafüred the “cheapest resort and hotel” in the country. Echoing the earlier pronouncement of the Minister of Agriculture – who was ultimately in charge of the resort – that Lillafüred “must be able to satisfy both the highest and simplest desires,”<sup>61</sup> Soltész wrote

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<sup>58</sup> Károly Lukács, “Ujra a Balatonról,” *Magyar Szemle* 6, no. 8 (1929): 376.

<sup>59</sup> In the words of one contributor, typical of this sensitivity: “It has always been puzzling and incomprehensible in expert circles as to why the Hungarian public thinks that Lillafüred is expensive and inaccessible.” József Gráf, “Ígaz-e, hogy Lillafüred olcsó? Néhány adat, ami mindenkit érdekel” *Lillafüredi Fürdőújság* 1, no. 2 (1933): 10. See also: Imre Soltész, “Lillafüred helye a nap alatt,” *Lillafüredi Fürdőújság* 2, no. 1-2 (1934): 1.

<sup>60</sup> Boldface in the original. “Mit akarok megcsinálni 1933-ban? Beszélgetés Patat direktorral,” *Lillafüredi Újság* 1, no. 1 (1933): 3.

<sup>61</sup> Miklós Kállay, “Lillafüred” *Lillafüredi Fürdőújság* 1, no. 3-4 (1933): 1.

glowingly about the prospect of opening it up not just to the middle class, but to “everyone.”<sup>62</sup> If a 1938 *Budapesti Hírlap* article is any indication, then, indeed, the defense of Lillafüred as “thrifty” and therefore accessible to the widely-defined middle class lasted through the interwar period and became a part of general public discourse.<sup>63</sup>

The socialist press naturally found any such attempts to vindicate Bethlen’s pleasure-palace on social grounds to be risible, albeit in keeping with the structural imperative of the bourgeoisie to justify itself. On this point, *Népszava* roundly condemned Lillafüred “as an instance of “the arrogance of class rule [lashing] out in the most brutal form.” It lampooned the idea that the resort was in any way a social good and a fair reward for a hard-working bourgeoisie, joking that its champions had “placed a new entry into the sociological dictionary: *the sweated middle class, which is in need of a little luxury resort.*”<sup>64</sup>

The advocates’ claim that the genius of Lillafüred dwelled in giving the Hungarian populace the world-class Grand Hotel it deserved – and the socialists’ counter-argument that this was disingenuous nonsense – raises the historical question of who, in fact, comprised the typical crop of guests at the Palotaszálló. It is easy here to lean in favor of the socialists: interwar Lillafüred was the kind of place visited by Hungarian high nobility – princes of the House of Habsburg, still named with their dynastic titles;<sup>65</sup> where the seasonal entertainments, such as the annual Anna Ball and beauty pageant, were nominally open to the public but aimed at resident

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<sup>62</sup> Imre Soltész, “Lillafüred Magyarország legolcsóbb fürdőhelye,” *Lillafüredi Fürdőújság* 2, no. 5-6 (1934): 1.

<sup>63</sup> “Olcsóság a ragyogó Lillafüreden,” *Budapesti Hírlap*, August 9, 1938: 4.

<sup>64</sup> “Lillafüred, a Talbot-ügy, a gyufamonopólium, a tőzsdei botrányok és a szövetkezeti dzsungel rejtelmek,” *Népszava*, October 18, 1928: 1.

<sup>65</sup> These included Archduke Albrecht Franz, Duke of Teschen (son of the supreme commander of Austro-Hungarian forces in the First World War) and Archduke Joseph Franz. “Albrecht főherceg Lillafüreden,” *Lillafüredi Fürdőújság* 4, no. 1-2 (1935): 1; R.J., “József főherceg és családja Lillafüreden,” *Lillafüredi Fürdőújság* 4, no. 3 (1935): 1.

grandeess; <sup>66</sup> and where, it seems, the directorship came under scrutiny for extending people of privilege (movie stars and aristocrats) financial favors.<sup>67</sup> Thus one suspects that even if Lillafüred was “cheap,” at least in comparison to foreign destinations, its doors were not truly open even to the whole of the “middle class,” let alone anyone from a lower social station.

Luckily, this is a question that can be assayed against precise documentary evidence. Because the Palace Hotel was a government-operated concern for much of its history, its operating records were destined to repose in the archives of the Ministry of Agriculture. Unluckily, few of these records have survived. Nevertheless it is possible to reconstruct a few moments in the hotel’s administrative life from the early and mid-1930s, including, for a short time, a glimpse at its clientele. When visitors signed the guestbook, they were asked to give their names (and the names of, or at least their relationship to, the others in their party), their occupation, and their city of origin. This information is invaluable for clarifying whose space Lillafüred effectively was – that is, a sociological overview of what kinds of people were expecting *their* needs and tastes to be served. Although the self-reported occupational categories are often specific and idiosyncratic, certain general trends do emerge.<sup>68</sup>

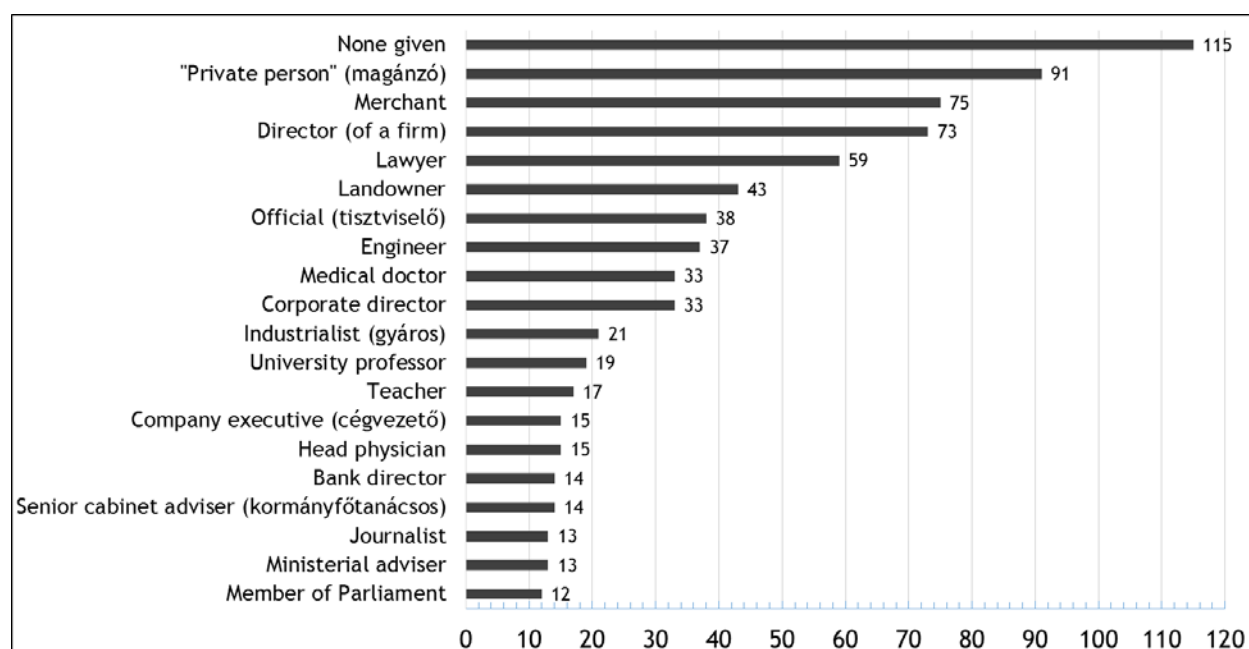
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<sup>66</sup> “Anna-bál,” *Lillafüredi Fürdőújság* 1, no. 7 (1933): 1.

<sup>67</sup> Internal documents indicate that Lajos Patat, who took over the directorship of the Palace Hotel after József Marchal, was dismissed for having given unauthorized discounts, having made too many unauthorized payments from hotel coffers, and generally “creative” bookkeeping. (See e.g. the audit recorded in MOL K184 4347. csomó, 3. tétel., 9564. szám and attachments, specifically pp. 260-269.) Consequently, it appears that Patat’s successor, József Fészl, confronted greater attention from his superiors. A table from 1937, detailing accounts payable, categorizes as “dubious” (among other things) an outlay made to Baron Gyula Radvánszky (noted as an act of the “Patat regime”), another to an unspecified member of the baronial Rudnyánszky family, and one to an “attendant” of actress Gita Alpár. “A lillafüredi ‘Palota-Szálló’ követelése 1937. február 10-ig,” MOL K184 4347. csomó, 3. tétel.

<sup>68</sup> The data discussed here strictly reflect occupational titles as given in the original records; no attempt has been made to interpret the equivalence of variations, let alone sort them into general categories. Only orthographic inconsistencies, including use of the feminizing suffix *-nő*, have been reconciled.

Between July 16, 1934 and January 4, 1935, Palace Hotel guest lists record 1,205 entries.<sup>69</sup> However, the number of discrete guests is much higher, perhaps even by two or three times, because when a client arrived with spouse or family, these individuals were lumped into the same entry. This is diluted only slightly by repeat appearances: forty-six names show up more than once during this period, accounting for 96 entries out of the total.



**Figure 9. Top 20 occupational categories listed in Lillafüred Palace Hotel guest lists, July 1934-January 1935**

What can we surmise about the socio-economic positions of these 1,159-plus persons?

Figure 9 above charts the top twenty most frequently listed occupational categories, comprising

<sup>69</sup> These lists were compiled twice monthly between July and the end of October, then monthly from November through January. MOL fonds K184 4126. csomó, 3. tétel for the 1934 dates and K184 4347. csomó, 3. tétel for 1935. The lists are titled "Névsor" and are presented in the folder attached to covering letters from the Palotaszálló director to the Forestry Department Chief (*erdészeti főosztályfőnök*).

750 entries, or 62.2 percent of the total. The single most frequent category is, in fact, a lack of reported occupational status (9.5 percent). The second most frequent is *magánzó* (7.6 percent). The meaning of this appellation is somewhat ambiguous. One can translate it as “private person” – but also as “person of private means” or “person of leisure,” implying both wealth and the absence of an occupation that provides a regular income. A closer examination of the entries marked *magánzó*, though, reveals that 72 of 91 are attached to names that are explicitly feminine (because of the Hungarian matrimonial suffix *-né*, or “Mrs.”) or apparently so (based on the appearance of a conventionally feminine name). Without dedicated biographical analysis of each name, it is impossible to determine a precise sociological placement, though it may be useful to observe that the list includes two countesses and the wife of film director Béla Gaál.

Beyond these two cloudy categories a sharper picture of the Palace Hotel clientele emerges. It is one populated by corporate managers, members of the classic professions (law, medicine, engineering, and education), upper-level civil servants, businessmen, and landowners (*földbirtokos*; 15 of 43 with noble titles). Even without knowing the precise incomes and net worth of the individuals concerned, this occupational distribution very closely matches that of the interwar aristocratic intelligentsia and (higher) bourgeoisie, as outlined in the work of Gábor Gyáni.<sup>70</sup>

Thus the jewel in the crown of Hungary’s premier resort area was, for one reason or another, mostly beyond the reach of the beleaguered office-workers about whom we read in Chapter 4: the ones who were encouraged to be satisfied with the scant – but patriotic – amenities of “paid hospitality.” In this sense the early attacks of the Social Democrats and others

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<sup>70</sup> Gábor Gyáni, “Social History of Hungary in the Horthy Era,” in *Social History of Hungary from the Reform Era to the End of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Gábor Gyáni, György Kövér, and Tibor Valuch (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 2004), 295–382.

proved to be as prescient as they were predictable. Lillafüred, and more specifically the Palace Hotel, was the “pleasure palace”<sup>71</sup> of the dominant classes, the result of immense outlays for the “expansion of the rich man’s vacation options.”<sup>72</sup> But, considering this point even further, it might be said that Lillafüred had all the makings of a classic bourgeois fantasy made real: joining the aristocracy, or at least living like a lord. For what was the Palace Hotel, if not an idealized resurrection of medieval princely splendor – albeit with elevators, electric lights, telephones, and radios in every room?<sup>73</sup> What was it, if not a chance for those with the means to vacate themselves not only from their daily routines, but to envelop themselves in a celebration of a Hungary before Trianon, and to mingle with other gentlefolk playing at royalty?

## 5.6 THE ENCHANTED CASTLE

It is exactly here, at the junction of class fantasy and historicist (indeed, irredentist) architecture, where rationalizations for Lillafüred’s existence ventured headlong to mystification and, in time, sublimation into popular culture through the medium of cinema. In both the literature aimed at the resort’s devotees (*Lillafüred Spa News*) and the mainstream press, as well as in tourist guidebooks, contemporaries extolled Lillafüred as something that transcended the state of a mere tourist enterprise. Indeed, they hailed it as though it were a manifestation of benevolent sorcery. It was a “dreamworld,” and the Palace Hotel its “magic manor”<sup>74</sup> – or, in what became the

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<sup>71</sup> Mutatili, “Eszmék,” *Népszava*, December 31, 1926: 4.

<sup>72</sup> “Lillafüred és a szocialista képviselők öröme,” *Népszava*, July 13, 1926: 11.

<sup>73</sup> Dobrossy, *A Palotaszálló és Lillafüred 75 éve*, 66.

<sup>74</sup> Imre Soltész, “Álomvilág,” *Lillafüredi Fürdőújság* 4, no. 1-2 (1935): 1.

prevailing cliché, a “fairy”<sup>75</sup> (*tündéri*) or “fairytale”<sup>76</sup> (*mesebeli*) castle. Even when the target of (non-political) criticism, Lillafüred was bathed in a legendary mist. One concerned outdoorsman wrote to the editors of *Budapesti Hírlap* to complain about the poor conditions and bad management of the transportation connections of Lillafüred (at least as of 1929), but acknowledged reverentially that the Palace Hotel “is such that fairies might have built it.”<sup>77</sup> Though it is probably a rather extreme example, the following poem reflects the kind of fetishizing praise that contributors submitted to *Lillafüred Spa News*. Its effusive romanticism makes wholesale quotation worthwhile:

Among the hills, in the palm of the cliffs  
 You float before me,  
 Made real,  
 The fairy castle turning on a duck’s leg<sup>78</sup>  
 Of my childhood.  
 Your gift celebrates  
 The moment  
 When the eye sees.  
 The beauty of nature  
 Commands to a contest  
 The works of men.  
 The stairways of tree-crowns  
 Behind you lead to the sky,  
 Victory’s joy  
 Tirelessly races on them  
 Upwards.  
 The lake obediently proffers  
 Its mirror before you.  
 Only the centuries your enchantment

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<sup>75</sup> Illyés, *Lillafüred és környéke: Utikalauz turisták, nyaralók részére*, 24.

<sup>76</sup> Emil Borbély-Maczkó, “Minden magyar jöjjön és ismerek meg Lillafüredet,” *Lillafüredi Fürdőújság* 1, no. 3-4: 1. An instance of the phrase used in a piece of feuilleton short fiction: Z. L., “Alakok és esetek,” *Budapesti Hírlap*, September 23, 1932: 3. (1933): 1.

<sup>77</sup> Gyula Szelóczky, “Egy magyar turista kesergője,” *Budapesti Hírlap*, August 18, 1929: 4.

<sup>78</sup> “Kacsalábon forgó tündéerkastély,” or “fairy-castle turning on a duck’s leg” seems to be a play on the folk saying “kacsalábon forgo palota” or “...vár,” i.e. “...palace” or “...castle.” As far as I can tell, this expression is used to signify something utterly fantastical, but (at least in the context of this poem) tinged with positive associations. Probably the closest English expression would be “Cloud-Cuckoo-Land.”



Can dispel.  
Your ruins hide  
From our grandchildren  
The beggary of our own days.

(Klára Kossán, “Palota-szálló”)<sup>79</sup>

It is likely impossible to tease apart the reasons why any given individual might choose to write about Lillafüred like this, much less to distinguish with certain the agenda(s) it would have served. We have little cause to doubt the sincerity of a bit of fan poetry in the vein of Kossán’s tribute; but, of course, once it was published, even in a highly localized newspaper like *Lillafüred Spa News*, it entered into a system of commercial promotion and myth-making that was intended to foster cultural solidarity among the hotel’s existing customer base and, beyond that, to attract new patrons. When the Lord Lieutenant of the county joined the chorus, it lent the construction of Lillafüred as a fantasyland a certain amount of official validity. Presumably this would benefit the county authorities in a variety of ways: helping generate economic activity, establishing Borsod County as a tourist destination, and painting its governor as a friend to both.

That said, for an array of actors with differing (if overlapping) intentions to cast a kind of magical veil over Lillafüred meant that the resort was removed discursively from the political realm; that is, it became extracted from the conflicts that had surrounded its construction and set apart from the social and economic contexts in which it actually operated. Fairytale castles can run without a ruler, without state funds, without wage labor. If fairies (Hungarian ones) built such a place, workers did not; if it is a place elevated above the mundane, then it is easy to imagine that nobody merely *worked* there at all, or, conversely, had to pay money to gain entrance. Benevolent and charming princes owned and administered glittering fastnesses like this

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<sup>79</sup> Klára Kossan, “Palota-szálló,” *Lillafüredi Fürdőújság* 1, no. 5-6 (1933): 10.

one, not the Ministry of Agriculture, which in reality ran Lillafüred as its profit-making fief. In short, the mystification of Lillafüred helped to de-politicize and de-commercialize it. No doubt this became all the easier when the man most associated with Lillafüred in the days of its genesis, István Bethlen, resigned in defeat from the prime ministry in 1931. And thus mystification was perhaps the supreme defense against the criticism that had hounded Lillafüred, since what use was rational argument against an object of wonderment?

Even so, de-politicization had its limits. The fact that the Palotaszálló not only looked like a castle, but indeed was mythicized because of it, held a double edge. The hotel complex's appearance probably only made it that much easier for socialists to condemn it as a classic example of the oppressors' vanity and prodigality. Its entire medieval-throwback scheme could with no trouble bring to mind the days of venal lords and suffering serfs, and the fact that it had a "hanging garden," to boot, invited comparisons to "oriental despotism."<sup>80</sup> Visiting Lillafüred as it was being built, a reporter from *Népszava* engaged with the imagery of the resort's defenders, but turned it from an emblem of pride into one of shame. "An enormous building with turreted crenellations glories loftily on the hillside: this is the Treasury's palace hotel. It is under construction now; inside there are a few hundred chambers and many, many billions in public money. Below it, a team of tiny houses huddle in a row, like some ragged embassy before the gate of a great lord."<sup>81</sup>

Nevertheless, it was the conception of Lillafüred as an enchanted castle that would reign triumphant in popular culture throughout the 1930s and into the war years. This was because it

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<sup>80</sup> Indeed, as one anonymous newspaper editor summed up (or rather lampooned) the anti-Lillafüred rhetoric of the time: "Lillafüred'... truly has come to be the collective name for unconscionable state management, irresponsible prodigality, the pursuit of fame and splendor, and a throng of pleasure-suites and hanging gardens – since historically-informed minds have reached back to the Pharaohs, the Renaissance popes, and the age of the Louises in order to catch a trace of this opulence and wastefulness." "Lillafüred legendája," *Budapesti Hírlap*, May 18, 1929: 3.

<sup>81</sup> Gy. B., "Egy fényes állami üdülőttelep árnyékai," *Népszava*, April 22, 1928: 7.

had the superlatively good fortune to “star” in the film that almost singlehandedly revived the Hungarian movie industry and set the mold for Hungarian film productions for more than a decade to follow. In this way, Lillafüred the fantasy palace, *not* Lillafüred the government folly, found immortality; in this way, Lillafüred the exclusive upper-class resort became a place millions had encountered virtually, and the place where dreams came true. The film’s name: *Meseautó*, or *Dream Car*.

### 5.7 FANTASIES OF MOBILITY IN *MESEAUTÓ*

*Meseautó* tells the story of a high-rolling, woman-killing bank director, János Szűcs (Jenő Törzs), who, after a series of twists and turns, falls in love (happily ever after) with Vera Kovács (Zita Perczel), a young secretary at the same bank. At the start of the film, Szűcs, overburdened by managing his crowded orbit of girlfriends, forswears romance and retreats to a month’s vacation from his duties at the Central Bank in Budapest. Meanwhile, Vera receives a comically tedious job stamping stock certificates at the bank. The two first meet one afternoon at a luxury automobile dealership, where Szűcs is taking title on the film’s eponymous cabriolet and Vera admires it through the window. Szűcs (suddenly abandoning his celibacy campaign) contrives to flirt with Vera, which he does by posing as a salesman and showing off the car – even though she is apparently so ignorant of motoring that she cannot identify the steering wheel. But when she is caught pretending to be well-heeled enough to make a purchase and he puts advances on her, Vera flees.

Undeterred and smitten, Szűcs has the car delivered anonymously to Vera’s house. Her mother (Lilli Berki), however, senses a scam and demands answers from the dealer. He tells the

mother that Vera was the showroom's ten-thousandth customer (when by one measurement there were not even 10,000 private automobiles in all of Budapest before 1940!<sup>82</sup>). Thereafter Szűcs pretends to be a simple chauffeur and strikes a deal with Vera's father so that he can, of course, get closer to her. The two appear to finally fall in love during a picnic in the Buda hills. Things become complicated, however, when Szűcs lavishes a huge monthly stipend on Vera. Gossip that the director has fallen in love with her storms through the bank, and she grows deeply embarrassed that a man (she believes) she has never even seen has decided to ply her with so much money. Szűcs cannot yet make himself known, and so arranges for a business associate to stand in for him and explain to Vera that the extra cash is a raise for her heroic contribution to the bank's operations. Unfortunately, the stand-in, Péterffy (Jenő Herczeg), also discovers an attraction towards her.

Szűcs decides to put Vera's feelings to the test and convinces her to go for a weekend at Lillafüred. However, a twist of fate makes her Péterffy's companion instead. She is forced to juggle her commitments to dine with either man until it is revealed that the humble chauffeur is really the bank director and the "bank director" a misguided old man. Her justifiable anger at being duped almost sabotages love for everyone until the good offices of the bank's chief accountant (Gyula Kabos) – who has trailed Vera to the bank on a secret mission of his own – helps set things straight. In the end, Szűcs pretends to have Vera dictate a letter: it turns out to be his proposal for marriage.

The film was directed by the rising talent Béla Gaál and premiered in late 1934 to rapturous acclaim. Gaál had helmed more than a dozen silent and sound features, including the

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<sup>82</sup> Gábor Gyáni, *Parlor and Kitchen: Housing and Domestic Culture in Budapest, 1870-1940* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002), 50. Gyáni reports that there were only 50 private cars in the city in the 1920s, 500 by the 1930s, and 10,787 in 1940.

well-received city-mouse-meets-country-mouse comedy *Az új rokon* (The New Relative) released earlier the same year. None, however, approached the sheer box-office popularity of *Meseautó*, which would be the film that defined him as arguably the foremost director working in Hungary in the 1930s. (Sadly, his career, like those of so many other Jews in the film industry, was cut short. Gaál [née Goldstein] died in early 1945 at the hands of the rampaging Arrow Cross.<sup>83</sup>) The press tossed laurel wreath after laurel wreath at Gaál's feet for having created what many came to regard as the commercial and artistic vindication of the entire Hungarian movie business. The reviewer for *Pesti Napló* proclaimed, "After a long, long time, *Meseautó* is the Hungarian film that we can, without any reservations, be proud of."<sup>84</sup> Pop-culture dynamo *Déliab* greeted it as "a wonderful Christmas present for Hungarian film production. A good theme, a good director, good actors, and good photography. It took less than a day for the gossip-mongers to take to spread the news across town of a great and genuine success. [...] Finally, good Hungarian cinema has succeeded. Finally."<sup>85</sup> Even socialist *Népszava*, from which one might expect to hear the voice of condemnation, called it "the first able-bodied Hungarian film that is truly worth seeing."<sup>86</sup> To the delight of theater operators, *Meseautó*'s first run lasted for weeks on end; and, if this were not definitive enough as a stamp of consumer approval, its hit songs were played "everywhere" many months after they were heard in cinemas.<sup>87</sup>

From a present-day perspective, the quasi-messianic reception of *Meseautó* may strike one as baffling. As a work of cinema it adheres both thematically and formally with light Hollywood romances of the period. In parts it resembles a screwball comedy, though it is rather

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<sup>83</sup> József Mudrák and Tamás Deák, *Magyar hangosfilm lexikon, 1931-1944* (Máriabesnyő: Attraktor, 2006), 115.

<sup>84</sup> "Meseautó," *Pesti Napló*, December 16, 1934: 22.

<sup>85</sup> "Végre!" *Déliab*, December 8, 1934: 80.

<sup>86</sup> "A meseautó' bemutató a Fórum filmszínházban," *Népszava*, December 16, 1934: 19. Cf. this warm reception to articles about the film published in the Communist era, which tended to range from nuanced Marxist analyses to running the film through a Stalinist shredder. These are collected in MNFA Dossier JF 45/1.

<sup>87</sup> Andor Lajta, *A tízéves magyar hangosfilm 1931-1941* (Budapest: Otthon, 1942), 11.

more timid in its exploration of gender roles than might be expected for that genre.<sup>88</sup> On the other hand, *Meseautó*'s similarities to Hollywood conventions – and its approximation of Hollywood quality – no doubt help explain why Hungarian critics and audiences were seduced so easily: it stood as proof that the home-grown film industry could summon the talent and resources to produce at an international caliber.

The most appealing thing about *Meseautó*, arguably, is its success at embodying a mix of fantasies closely held among its principal audience, the filmgoers of Budapest. In the broadest view, *Meseautó* was typical of its generation in that it takes for granted a version of Hungary that is fully connected to globalized images of urban society. Anna Manchín has characterized the majority of Hungarian-produced commercial features from this period as “fables of modernity.” She writes of these movies that “they offer an unexpected vision of Hungary as a modern, successful and cosmopolitan place where the traditional countryside is eager to follow the lead of Budapest. They portray a confident middle class capable of leading the nation into capitalist, European modernity, using commercial culture as a panacea for the nation’s ills, and reconciling contradictions between urban and rural and traditional and modern cultures.”<sup>89</sup> The reason this tendency is “unexpected” – and to a considerable degree a fantasy – is that this version of Hungarian society was, notoriously, the hobby-horse of conservative thinkers, for whom “modernity” was synonymous with moral degeneracy, the abandonment of tradition and religiosity, and the corrupting influence of Jews in their classic dual role as both godless

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<sup>88</sup> The Modern Playhouse cinema in New York City screened the film (in Hungarian) several years after its premiere. The *New York Times* judged the story to be “a routine one.” H.T.S., “The Screen: At the Modern Playhouse,” *New York Times*, November 10, 1936.

<sup>89</sup> Anna B. Manchín, “Fables of Modernity: Entertainment Films and the Social Imaginary in Interwar Hungary” (Ph.D. dissertation, Brown University, 2008), 2.

international Marxists and insatiable capitalists.<sup>90</sup> But it is a fantasy, or at least an idealization, also because it did not in fact reflect the whole panorama of social and cultural life in Hungary: it was the mixed projection of a world both wished for (by many) and really inhabited by (some) city-dwellers. But this fact is arguably no major deviation from the norms of international commercial cinema. It was a vision of the world that, however incomplete, and whatever the national variation, sold tickets in New York or Berlin as easily as in Budapest.

What makes *Meseautó* interesting, however, are the more specific kinds of fantasies that it weaves together. It is, simply put, a fairy tale of mobility: of the liberation afforded by cars and travel, and of mobility from one social class to a higher one. As István Nemeskürty has observed, the film is a “variant of the Cinderella theme which, in the course of time, has been put before the public in more than a thousand versions.”<sup>91</sup> Yet it is a distinctly Jazz Age take on this formula, which contemporary observers appreciated more fully than Nemeskürty seems to have. Here is *Délibáb*’s revealing synopsis:

The dream car is a child of the twentieth century. Twenty, thirty years ago, the romantic young ladies in country manors and the sentimental daughters of petit-bourgeois apartments still dreamed of magic steeds with white coats and proud postures. But we

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<sup>90</sup> The conservative vendetta against Jewish and “anti-national” influence in the film industry has been the focus of detailed study in recent years. Manchin’s dissertation is partially a response to the discussion begun by David Stephen Frey, “National Cinema, World Stage: A History of Hungary’s Sound Film Industry, 1929-44” (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 2003), which is digested in David Frey, “Just What Is Hungarian?: Concepts of National Identity in the Hungarian Film Industry, 1931-1944,” in *Constructing Nationalities in East Central Europe*, ed. Pieter M. Judson and Marsha L. Rozenblit (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2005), 203–22. See also: David S. Frey, “Aristocrats, Gypsies, and Cowboys All: Film Stereotypes and Hungarian National Identity in the 1930s,” *Nationalities Papers* 30, no. 3 (2010): 383–401; Anna Manchin, “Imagining Modern Hungary through Film: Debates on National Identity, Modernity, and Cinema in Early Twentieth-Century Hungary,” in *Cinema, Audiences, and Modernity: New Perspectives on European Cinema History*, ed. Daniel Biltereyst, Richard Maltby, and Philippe Meers (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 64–80; Anna Manchin, “Gyula Kabos and ‘Jewish Difference,’” *Hungarian Quarterly* 54, no. 209 (2014): 4–22.

<sup>91</sup> István Nemeskürty, *Word and Image: History of the Hungarian Cinema* (Budapest: Corvina, 1968), 87.

progress, and as one of the results of progress, women today dream about shiny, slinky, finely-shaped dream cars; and, as for legendary heroes, the imaginations of 17-, 18-year-old ladies are occupied by executive directors and tycoons in the prime of manhood rather than dashing gallants. As times change, so does the dreamworld of romance. *Meseautó* places onto film one of the most characteristic symbols of this changed dreamworld... This charming comedy's leading role: desire. The desire of a little bank-clerk-girl for a true, beautiful, gliding automobile. [...] The film's plot: how does a dream come true?<sup>92</sup>

For Vera – who is, after all, the quasi-independent “daughter of a petit-bourgeois apartment” – the dream of a magnificent car is achieved by means of a leading member of the managerial caste. Thus her path to the car, itself the material embodiment of increased freedom of movement, is also her path to rising in society. Despite the apparent simplicity of the plot, it presents some interesting questions about class and gender. While Vera is employed as a “little bank-clerk-girl,” she seems to enjoy a certain amount of material and personal autonomy. She lives at home with her family, true, but her acquisition of the Dream Car lets her gad about the city without their interference. The car *seems* to grant her a considerable range of liberties, beholden neither to father nor husband. What Vera does not know, of course, is that a man who *would be* her husband is responsible for opening those liberties to her, both as the buyer of the car as well as its driver. Unable to operate the vehicle herself, she must rely temporarily on her future husband (in lower-class drag) to follow her command. Therefore her freedom from male

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<sup>92</sup> “Hogy valósul meg egy álom?” *Délibáb*, December 1, 1934: 66.



patronage is in fact illusory, and one might read the “message” of the plot to be that it is not a dream worth having.

But it is not certain that Vera even strives for this kind of liberty, since she never voices such a desire. Above all, she wants the Dream Car, and the mobility, status, and sheer materialist pleasure that comes with it. From what we can gather of Vera’s perspective, men, let alone marriage, are not on her mind. In fact, the car *itself* is the object of her sublimated erotic longings. On the evening of the day that the car is delivered to her family’s building (but before Szűcs reports for chauffeur duty), Vera sits alone in the parked car. “Sit” is perhaps not quite the *mot juste*: she writhes around in her seat with near-sexual ecstasy as she listens to a broadcast of the movie’s theme song come over the car radio. The scene turns into montage as the shot of Vera in a trance-like state swaps several times for shots of Szűcs listening to the same broadcast at home; it is almost as if he has ordered the ever-potent car to be his stand-in phallus and we the viewers become voyeurs to its conquest. At one point in the sequence Szűcs pours two glasses of liquor: one obviously for himself and a second, presumably Vera’s, that he toasts with the first. At last, Vera, spent and sated, falls asleep in the car, and an indulgent policeman kindly pulls a blanket over her. Little does Vera know that her first night with the Dream Car presages the marriage that, by movie’s end, she will be on course to consummate with her as-yet anonymous patron. Until the truth emerges, however, we have no reason to believe that Vera has any conscious carnal appetite for Szűcs. As yet, her most direct sense of gratification comes from the automobile, and only by proxy from the man who bought it.

This is no less true for the viewer. *Meseautó* takes great pains to sweep up its audience in the fantasy of mobility by letting it share the experience of travel by way of sympathetic characters and, above all, the repeated use of spectacular (for 1934) on-location point-of-view

shots. Nemeskürty, who otherwise seems to take a dim view of the film's value as a cultural artifact, helps point out these strategies. He contends that the role played by Gyula Kabos "is the real value of this inane imitation of Hollywood films." Indeed, Kabos was perhaps the greatest comedic film star of early Hungarian sound cinema, and for Nemeskürty, his performance is the centerpiece of the film's vision. Kabos plays Aladár Halmos, the Central Bank's fussy, bumbling, stuttering, but ultimately good-natured chief accountant. Nemeskürty attributes to this character a certain importance as the vehicle for social commentary: "All that is connected with Kabos, the dull office atmosphere emitting a stale, sour smell, with the rubber stamps, the oversleeves, the Sunday excursion to Zugliget, belongs to the reality of Budapest which may be lower middle-class but is nevertheless healthier and more realistic than the world of the general manager." As the petit-bourgeois Everyman, therefore, Halmos serves as the persona through which the viewer could imagine him/herself journeying through the locations shown in the film. "Here the cinema-goer saw himself at the swimming-pool, in the park, on the hills surrounding Budapest, in fact every place the film followed Kabos."<sup>93</sup>

Nemeskürty's analysis is valuable because it highlights the ways in which *Meseautó* is a film about the exploration of spaces of modernity, spaces both of work and leisure, of fantasy and reality. We should not think, however, that Halmos is the only (or even primary) character whose travels both reflect and contribute to the construction of particular spaces. The reading Nemeskürty gives here has an assuredly state-socialist-era tilt and does not give much room to a sympathetic understanding of the film's unquestionable popularity at the time of its release; moreover, his focus on Kabos's character pays no attention to the heroine's probable appeal to the many actual young women whose position in labor and society she mirrored – and who

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<sup>93</sup> Nemeskürty, *Word and Image*, 86–88.

consistently formed a demographic pillar of cinema audiences. The Dream Car belongs to Vera, after all, and despite its fantastic provenance, literally stands for the vehicle of her freedom and (social) mobility.

Her first ride in the convertible is a drive down the west bank of the Danube, starting (in today's geography) from Clark Adam Square, then heading south down the Buda Lower Embankment [Alsó Rakpart], then turning left and crossing the Erzsébet Bridge. This little trip is shot in point-of-view from the passengers' perspective. In its opening moments we exit the Castle Hill tunnel and approach the Buda head of the Chain Bridge – a shot that transmits an unmistakable sense of place. Thus I would echo Nemeskürty in judging that the overall effect of *Meseautó*'s Budapest scenes is “to [emphasize] that the action was taking place [there] and in no other city.” This encouraged the contemporary viewer – particularly if he or she was from the city or otherwise acquainted with it – to identify with the film's action, themes, and characters. It bound these elements to particular spaces inhabited by recognizable figures and permitted the viewer to travel through them, whether for the first time or as a projected image of locations with which the viewer could claim a personal association. “The film-goer,” Nemeskürty continues,

was glad to see the Danube embankment, the Chain and Elizabeth Bridges on the screen. It was in this café at the corner on the Danube embankment that the neighborhood grocer usually had his breakfast, and the man scribbling away at the other desk, Gyula Kabos, was familiar to young and old in every quiver of his eye-lids, every gesture of his hands, and in every remark he made.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 88.

But while Vera's grand ride certainly relies on the traits of the familiar to root both scene and viewer in a unique environment, it simultaneously liberates the heroine (along with her empathetic spectators) from her customary position in society and the view of the street that comes with it. When the camera heads down the Erzsébet Bridge in the final stage of the montage, it effortlessly passes by trams and pedestrians as if to emphasize how the passengers of the Dream Car can simply glide around dull representations of the everyday. Vera's standing in the world has been elevated to a level where she may traverse her hometown at will with a grace previously unattainable on foot or public transportation. Through the camera, the viewer travels with her.

This Vera—Dream Car—Viewer ensemble returns to the road for the story's climactic trip to Lillafüred. Once again, the freedom and style of the Dream Car is juxtaposed with more plebeian forms of transportation: the accountant Halmos also ventures to Lillafüred, but as Everyman he is stuck taking a bus, and we do not get to share his ride. Only Vera's passage to the resort warrants the full attention of the camera, which, as before, virtually places the viewer in her seat through point-of-view shots. Whereas on the joyride through Budapest Vera experienced the ennoblement of the familiar and the urban, here, on the approach to Lillafüred, the Dream Car takes Vera far away from that setting to a wholly new one that earlier in her life had been nothing more (or less) than the stuff of fantasy. The tracking shot that presents the Palotaszálló for the first time is nothing if not calculated to awe the viewer. Seen from Vera's perspective, the Dream Car emerges from a tunnel to show more and more of the hotel's eastern side – a revelatory vision of its majesty, though trivialized somewhat by the jaunty score that accompanies it.

The fact that *Meseautó*'s final act unfolds at Lillafüred is an outstanding demonstration of the resort's cultural significance. Not only is it the site of the all-important Happy Ending, but it also the terminus of the characters' social and material desires, not to mention of the Dream Car's journey. (In this fairytale, though, Cinderella's carriage doesn't revert to a pumpkin; it rejoins through marriage the household assets of the prince who bought it.) Furthermore, the scenes at Lillafüred command a considerable amount of screen-time (not including the eventful and scenic trip there, occupies the last twenty minutes of an approximately 94-minute film), and are very definitely intended to enthrall the viewer through the power of on-location shooting. Vera and the bank director Szűcs (still posing as her driver) rendezvous and stroll about the grounds of the resort. At one point in their tour, they pause to lean on one of the crenellated walls of the "hanging garden" at the base of the hill upon which the hotel sits. In direct repetition of the language used in the real-world press to mystify Lillafüred as a land beyond judgment, Szűcs peers up at the hotel and declares, "Look at how pretty! Like a fairytale castle!" ("Nézzé, milyen szép! Mint egy mesebeli vár!"). Vera affirms, "Gyönyörű!" ("Beautiful!") The pair continue on to take in the grandeur of the nearby waterfall. The viewer shares in these experiences as well. As if to insist upon a minimum sense of amazement at the crown jewel of the Hungarian tourism industry, the camera pans up and across the exterior of the Palotaszálló; then, somewhat later, lingeringly up the waterfall, pausing to show how its splendor dwarfs the two lovers.

*Meseautó*'s dramatization of life inside Lillafüred's legendary hotel brings a touch of social reality to the proceedings. However, while the action of the interior complicates the shimmering perfection on the exterior, it too preserves the fairytale, albeit from another direction. Here class, and money in general, makes an open appearance. These would have been

themes on the minds of contemporary audiences already, and comprise an obvious subtext of the film, but on several occasions the movie consciously brings them to light.

A pair of such moments takes place naturally enough at the hotel's front desk, where financial wherewithal determines who gets to sleep where. Vera checks in with the pseudo-Szűcs Péterffy, who acquires her a full-size room on the second floor. She squirms for fear of the price, worrying aloud how expensive it might be. When the desk attendant tells her the price, she gasps in amazement– but Péterffy quickly reassures her, without giving away the ongoing deception, not to worry about the amount. The next shot finds Vera, all smiles, standing on the balcony of her room, happily watching elegant guests dance and dine on the terrace below. Halmos's experience when he arrives is markedly different. When the clerk asks him what kind of room he'd like, Halmos replies that it doesn't matter, as long as it is cheap. Then, when the clerk offers him a small, no-frills *turistaszoba* (presumably designed for exhausted and thrifty hikers in mind) for ten pengős, Halmos wrinkles his nose at the price and flashes the deadpan riposte, "Are there no Boy Scout rooms?"

Another juxtaposition revolves around food, and the place it is consumed, as a marker of class. After Vera and Szűcs (in his chauffeur disguise) complete their tour of the resort grounds and share a romantic moment, Szűcs tells Vera that he is staying not at the Palotaszálló, but at a "humbler" place in a nearby village. However, he invites Vera to eat dinner with him in the hotel: she'll wear her evening gown, he his tuxedo, and for an evening they will sip Champagne like "lords." But Vera demurs. It would be happy enough, romantic enough, to eat *pörkölt* (meat stew, heavy on the paprika) and drink a *fröccs* (white wine spritzer) at the little tavern in the village. Indeed, it is there that the final scene – and Szűcs's proposal – occurs. But for this to happen, Vera must first politely but nonetheless indignantly reject the bemonocled pseudo-Szűcs

and his attempt to lavish upon her a multi-course banquet in the Palotaszálló's grand hall, a proposal she very nearly accepts. Although, on one hand, Vera's final choice consciously diverts the crucial action away from the luxurious world of the Grand Hotel, it only deepens the fabulous nature of the story. Szűcs is a man of great means, but he is at home among the working class (having pulled off a convincing [to Vera] turn as a humble driver) and delights in the same red-blooded-Hungarian comfort food as the little bank-girl of his affections. Such a characterization at once reinforces the expected class stereotypes, i.e. "rich people eat fancy [French] food in fancy places," while adding a certain gratifying twist to the fantasy of Szűcs as the ideal man. ("Bank directors: *they're just like us!*") From this angle, *Meseautó* is not only a simple rehash of "Cinderella," but an inverted version in which the Prince dresses down in lower-class drag in order to woo the girl, who spends her days in rote white-collar labor rather than scullery duty. Moreover, unlike in the classic version of the tale, this modern Cinderella marries her *employer*, not a semi-legendary prince, resulting in what Gyöngyi Balogh and Jenő Király have called "a utopian matrimonial regime" uniting labor and capital.<sup>95</sup>

It is difficult to overstate the imprint that Gaál's *Meseautó* left on the interwar Hungarian movie industry. Within only a few months of its release fans and industry experts alike were regarding it as the benchmark of what could be achieved in domestic film production.<sup>96</sup> And it remained a major object of comparison decades later: an archivist, tasked with summarizing the rickety wartime feature *Édes ellenfél* (Sweet Adversary), chose in 1969 to describe it as "a bad

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<sup>95</sup> Király and Balogh, *Csak egy nap a világ...*, 151.

<sup>96</sup> Reader Béla Arday penned a fan review of *Köszönöm, hogy elgázolt* [Thank You for Running Me Over!](1935, dir. Emil Martonffy) in which he judged it to be "the first Hungarian film after *Meseautó* that, in terms of exhibition, cinematography, and directing, has taken up competition with foreign movies of a similar caliber." Béla Arday, "A kritikus közönség," *Délibáb*, March 16, 1935: 64. In the industry expert journal *Mozivilág*, an anonymous author found *Elnökkisasszony* [Miss President] (1935, dir. Endre Marton) to be a disappointing "regression" from the level of *Meseautó*. "Elnökkisasszony," *Mozivilág*, September 23, 1935: 4.

1941 edition of *Meseautó*.”<sup>97</sup> While its scenes at Lillafüred comprised only a part of what *Meseautó* had to offer, it is possible to gather a few hints that they, too, contributed to the work’s legacy. A teaser report on Béla Gaál’s 1935 *Címzett ismeretlen* (Address Unknown; see Chapter 2) framed it as a follow-up to *Meseautó*, revealing (inaccurately) that “after Lillafüred” the lakeside town of Siófok would be the next on-location site featured in the director’s oeuvre. What’s more, the article praised this as a hopeful sign of the changes brought about by the success of *Meseautó*. “The producers of Hungarian films now in production have fortunately come to the realization that exterior shooting is absolutely necessary. Only in vain do they build studio sets, however effective, of country mansions, of cosmopolitan beaches, or just of verdant hillsides – these will never provide the audience with the necessary illusion.”<sup>98</sup>

Two later films apparently sought to cash in on Lillafüred as the selling point of a box office hit. One of them, *Rád bízom a feleségem* [I Entrust My Wife to You] (1937, dir. János Vaszary), has been lost.<sup>99</sup> The other, however, survives and is available for comparison. *Egér a palotában* [Mouse in the Palace] (1942, released 1943; dir. Emil Martonffy) very much strives to be an heir to *Meseautó*, although it is more farce than fairytale. A tagline displayed in the daily press to market *Egér* – “Youth! Merriment! Beautiful footage!” – shows that producers continued to see on-location shooting as a path to a better box office take.<sup>100</sup> The movie’s heroine, Eszti, nicknamed “Mouse” (*Egér*), is not a working woman like Vera but instead a student (of ambiguous sexual maturity) at an all-girls boarding school (suggestively titled the White Rose Institute). Like her comrades, she becomes smitten with a handsome young

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<sup>97</sup> MNFA Dossier JF 2312.

<sup>98</sup> “Lillafüred után Siófok,” *Budapest Hírlap*, June 23, 1935: 15.

<sup>99</sup> Apparently the film’s plot contained elements highly reminiscent of *Grand Hotel* as well as *Meseautó*, with one of the characters declaring, “This is the story of how the director marries the typist.” Varga, *Játékfilmek 1931-1998*, 98.

<sup>100</sup> *Népszava*, November 25, 1943: 10.



substitute math teacher, Sándor, whose obvious attraction to Eszti is a source of tension for both the characters and the audience. But Sándor leaves the school after landing another position – that, as yet unbeknownst to Eszti, is at Lillafüred. Not long after Sándor’s departure, Eszti receives a postcard from her estranged father. He has written her from the famous Palotaszálló, where he is occupied cavorting with a young dancer. Fate contrives to unite the three characters when the girls of the White Rose go on excursion to the forests around Lillafüred. Eszti becomes separated from the group and stumbles helplessly through the woods until she comes upon the hotel. Once inside, Eszti is sucked into a typical operetta whirlwind of coincidences, chance encounters, and reconciliations: she and Sándor admit their love for each other; Eszti reconnects with her repentant father; and Sándor brokers a reunion between Eszti’s mother (who just happens to be there) and father. Relationships are created, healed, and (re)legitimated; and, as in *Meseautó*, beautiful Lillafüred provides the environment for a Happy Ending.

Nearly half of *Egér* takes place at or near Lillafüred, with much of the screen-time given over to interior shots within the Palotaszálló. As in *Meseautó*, the portrayal of the hotel in *Egér* pays no special attention to its irredentist and explicitly nationalist trappings. Rather, it is very much an establishment in the *Grand Hotel* vein, with genteel people inhabiting an appropriately elegant place, and with emphatically “modern” accoutrements like a cocktail bar, a jazz band, and a glitzy musical revue. Nonetheless, *Egér* echoes *Meseautó* in cinematically venerating Lillafüred as an emblem of majesty. The most telling instance occurs when Eszti becomes lost on the school trip and runs with melodramatic desperation through the forest in search of a way back to the bus. Just when it seems that all hope is lost, the churning, suspenseful film score breaks into a fanfare, and the view cuts to a medium low angle shot looking up from the level of Eszti’s waist (in essence an expanded over-the-shoulder shot from an inferior position, as the

camera seems to be stationed downhill). Looming over her – and the viewer – is the main turret and cupola of the Palace Hotel. The building breaks into the scene as though it were a church offering sanctuary to the desperate, or a castle in the wilderness that would throw wide its gates for a helpless, wayward damsel. Though brief, the shot expresses Lillafüred as a site of magnanimous power: its resemblance to a fortress, whether noble or ecclesiastical, fits entirely in line with the longstanding mystification of the hotel as something transplanted from legend. Thus we see that *Egér* conveniently takes a cue from *Meseautó* – even if, indeed, the rest of the movie is a tepid rehash of the earlier film’s themes of fortuitous love and miracle connections cooked up during wartime out of ration-card schmaltz. The film flopped, apparently because it doled out a serving of the same old pap, of which viewers had had their fill. As one journal put it, “the patience of even today’s audience has limits.”<sup>101</sup>

## 5.8 THE WEIBES RÖBL: A HOTEL IN THE KEY OF *HEIMAT*

The highly politicized and explicitly nationalist nature of Lillafüred and its Palace Hotel, not to mention the fact that it had been constructed almost from scratch in the late 1920s, make it a unique place in the history of tourism in interwar Europe. It was a post-imperial phenomenon *par excellence* in its intention and design. It also reflected the underdeveloped condition of the Hungarian tourism industry relative to more westerly European states. With the possible exception of Semmering, Austria had no direct counterpart to Lillafüred; for although Hungarian promoters did pitch Lillafüred as the “Hungarian Semmering,” the Austrian resort was larger,

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<sup>101</sup> Tibor Dénes, “Magyar filmek,” *Katolikus Szemle* LVII, no. 9 (1943): 277.

more alpine, more easily accessed from the capital, predated the First World War by several decades, and, not least of all, was a cluster of privately-owned hotels rather than a single establishment run by the government. But, thinking in terms of popular culture and cinema in particular, we can identify one place in Austria that had as much cachet, if not even more, as Lillafüred. That place was the Weißes Rößl (White Horse Inn) in the town of St. Wolfgang. The region it symbolized, the Salzkammergut, which in medieval and early modern times comprised exclusively of an area of western Upper Austria, but which today covers an expanded area that includes portions of eastern Salzburg State as well.

The name Salzkammergut is today synonymous with tourism, but its literal meaning (“Estate of the Salt Chamber”) divulges the commercial importance it once had for its hereditary owners, the House of Habsburg. It is a region defined by its multiple mountain ranges (the Salzkammergut and Dachstein Mountains, the Totes Gebirge, and the Upper Austrian Prealps), the Traun, its principal river, and not least of all the alpine lakes (Traunsee, Attersee, Mondsee, Wolfgangsee, and Fuschlsee). Aside from Bad Ischl, which lies at the confluence of the Traun and Ischl rivers, it is the abundance of lakes that has long provided its attraction to travelers for the better part of two centuries. The White Horse Inn that made the Salzkammergut internationally known from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century onward is one of several that have historically dotted the area: one official guidebook from 1926 listed no fewer than five.<sup>102</sup> Its hometown, St. Wolfgang, is one of many waterfront resort communities that hug the glacial lakeshores punctuating the valleys. It is because that inn and its town have been “stars” of stage and screen for over a century that, for just as long, they have helped tourism promoters cultivate an image of

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<sup>102</sup> Österreichische Verkehrsbureau, *Das Salzkammergut: Reisehandbuch*, 4th ed. (Wien: Österreichische Verkehrsbureau, 1926).

the Salzkammergut as a homey, lighthearted, ultimately peaceful place that is both timeless (or at any rate time-resistant) and willing to negotiate the demands of the moment.

Historically, the touristic appeal of the Salzkammergut had been intimate and exclusive. In a way very similar to, but considerably earlier than, the area that became Lillafüred in Hungary, the Salzkammergut was “discovered” in the late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century by travelers seeking encounters with the Sublime. In 1823, the opening of a spa cure facility opened Bad Ischl proved the cornerstone of the region’s future as a magnet for aristocrats, urban socialites, and their hangers-on who sought to combine the preservation of their health with the seasonal transplantation of their élite social and political milieux.<sup>103</sup> The most decisive moment for the Salzkammergut, however, came in 1849, when the young Emperor Franz Joseph I adopted it as his summertime residence. (His discontented and Hungarophile wife Elisabeth, on the other hand, pointedly chose the royal estate in the Budapest suburb of Gödöllő as her personal retreat from 1867 until her death in 1898.) The Kaiser’s faithful annual presence guaranteed that other court personages and members of international high society would follow; thus not only did Bad Ischl become the de facto “capital” of the Salzkammergut, but for a number of weeks each year was, in a sense, the center of the empire. In turn, the reliably high concentration of celebrity patrons, *Kurmusik* (spa music) and light opera ensembles attracted the monarchy’s popular operetta composers, particularly Franz (Ferenc) Lehár, Emmerich (Imre) Kálmán, and Robert Stolz, the last of whom would go on to co-compose the score for *Im weißen Rößl*.<sup>104</sup> Ischl’s reputation and the loyalty of its regular guests sustained its tourist traffic even after the death of

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<sup>103</sup> Alois Brusatti, *100 Jahre österreichischen Fremdenverkehr: historische Entwicklung, 1884-1984* (Vienna: Bundesministerium für Handel, Gewerbe und Industrie, 1984), 16.

<sup>104</sup> The development of Ischl as the Habsburg World’s so-called *Operettenbörse* (“operetta stock exchange”) is the subject of Ian Bradley, *Water Music: Music Making in the Spas of Europe and North America* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), Chapter 5.

Franz Joseph in 1916 and the dissolution of the empire two years later.<sup>105</sup> Even so, the its clientele changed as the antebellum generation gradually passed on, and Bad Ischl, along with the rest of the Salzkammergut, became more oriented towards the new patterns of mass tourism, particularly the rise of the automobile. A positive result of this, according to Wilifried Heller, was that considerable investments were made to improve the road network.<sup>106</sup>

The 19<sup>th</sup>-century flowering and fin-de-siècle heyday of Bad Ischl as the small but vibrant hub of the Salzkammergut tourist trade went hand-in-hand with the development of the region's small lakeside towns into cozy *Sommerfrische* (see Chapter 3). St. Wolfgang, a community of but a few thousand people, was representative of this trend.<sup>107</sup> Vastly more documentation exists on the history of the White Horse Inn as a cultural phenomenon and, in more recent years, a slick commercial brand, than on the institution itself. It opened for business in 1878 and in 1912 the Peter family, its current owners, purchased the building.<sup>108</sup> Although the White Horse's exterior appearance and branding (at least through the interwar period) styled it as an old-fashioned rustic inn, at 60 rooms and 90 beds it was officially classified as a hotel.<sup>109</sup>

The origin of the White Horse's influence as a pop-culture icon is in the stage play *Im weißen Rößl* (At the White Horse Inn), written by the German playwrights Oscar Blumenthal and Gustav Kadelberg and premiering in Berlin in 1897. Differing accounts from over the years

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>106</sup> Wilifried Heller, *Der Fremdenverkehr im Salzkammergut: Studie aus geographischer Sicht* (Heidelberg: Geographischer Institut der Universität Heidelberg, 1970), 71.

<sup>107</sup> Franz Karl Ginzkey, *Salzburg und das Salzkammergut* (Bielefeld and Leipzig: Velhagen & Klasing, 1934), 42–44.

<sup>108</sup> “People for People,” *Im Weißen Rößl: Ein Gutes Stück Österreich*, accessed November 13, 2015, <http://www.weissesroessl.at/en/hotel/generation-host-wolfgangsee.html>. In recent years the Peter family teamed up with operetta scholar Kevin Clarke to produce a glossy coffee-table celebration of the Weißes Rößl media “franchise” and its relationship to the hotel, but there is very little in it dealing with the period before 1930. Kevin Clarke and Helmut Peter, *Im weißen Rößl: Auf den Spuren eines Welterfolgs* (St. Wolfgang im Salzkammergut: Helmut Peter, 2007).

<sup>109</sup> Österreichischen Verkehrsbureau, *Austria-Hotelbuch 1935: Führer durch die Österreichischen Hotels, Gasthöfe, Pensionen, Kuranstalten, Sanatorien und Pensionate* (Vienna: Österreichischen Verkehrsbureau, 1935), 236–237.

cloud the precise identity of the inn that inspired the work, i.e. whether they had in fact stayed at the real Weißes Rößl in St. Wolfgang; but there seems to exist a consensus that Blumenthal and Kadelburg's White Horse, along with its owner and head waiter, the two main "locals" in the play, were all modeled after real-life examples.<sup>110</sup> The First World War and the crises that followed wrought havoc on the Salzkammergut as it did everywhere else in Austria. But, following the economic recovery of 1922-23, St. Wolfgang and its now-famous hotel enjoyed several "golden" years of good business, thanks largely to the loyal patronage of guests from former Habsburg territories.<sup>111</sup> As with the advent of the original play, these were fertile conditions for the first (silent) film adaptation of *Im weißen Rößl*, which appeared in 1926, starring Liane Haid and directed by Richard Oswald.<sup>112</sup>

The definitive pop-culture breakthrough for the White Horse, however, came courtesy of the 1930 operetta *Im weißen Rößl*. It was, so the story goes, the result of a jovial wine-fueled conversation between the internationally-renowned film actor Emil Jannings and the owner of the White Horse in St. Wolfgang, where Jannings had been lodging. Evidently infatuated with

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<sup>110</sup> In 1934 the Gmunden newspaper *Neuste Post* claimed, on the basis of an unnamed correspondent's letter, that the original, actual inspiration for the Weißes Rößl was in fact an inn called the Rudolfshöhe in the Tyrolean village of Kaltenbach. There stayed the playwright Blumenthal, where he met the "attractive, lively" *Rößlwirtin* Josefa Voglhuber (named the same as his future character) and the owner, Leopold Peter, became the basis for the character of the waiter Leopold Brandmeier. The article blamed "Viennese writers" (Blumenthal hailed from Berlin) for having "consigned the historical sources of the play to obscurity," asserting that they had been "led astray" by the fact that Blumenthal named his fictional hotel the Weißes Rößl, which made them look to the Salzkammergut to locate the work's true wellspring. "Die 'Rößlwirtin' – Wo das Lustspiel 'Weißes Rößl' entstand," *Neuste Post*, May 30, 1934: 6. The historian Ian Bradley offers a different account, according to which Blumenthal had stayed in Lauffen, an Upper Austrian town much closer to St. Wolfgang. But Bradley also holds that Josepha and Leopold were based on real individuals whom Blumenthal met firsthand. Bradley, *Water Music: Music Making in the Spas of Europe and North America*, 139.

<sup>111</sup> Clarke and Peter, *Im weißen Rößl: Auf den Spuren eines Welterfolgs*, 211.

<sup>112</sup> It is perhaps worth a footnote to address the (remote) possibility that Oswald's 1926 film was *not* the first cinematic adaptation of *Im weißen Rößl*. One review from the time of the movie's release called it the "film birth" of the play, reflecting what is (as far as I can tell) conventional wisdom. But, before the premier of the 1935 version directed by Carl Lamač, *Mein Film* quite cryptically referred to it (the 1935 version) as the play's third movie adaptation. The meaning of this is obscure; for while it is possible that there existed a version that has since been lost, I have encountered no other evidence of it. "Im weissen Röss'l," *Kinematograph*, no. 1020 (September, 1926): 19, cf. Stella Wolfgang, "Das weiße Rößl am Wolfgangsee," *Mein Film* No. 506 (1935): 5.

the place, Jannings advanced the idea that an update of the 1897 play would be just the thing to rekindle the inn's dimmed popularity among Reich Germans. He proposed the Berlin director Erik Charell as project leader.<sup>113</sup> Charell duly signed on and tasked an all-star committee of composers (Ralph Benatzky, Robert Stolz, and Bruno Granichstaedten) and writers (lyrics by Robert Gilbert; libretto adapted by Hans Müller-Einigen and Charell himself) to bring the White Horse back to the stage. It was an unqualified success. The operetta's opening run in Berlin lasted for 400 sold-out shows; its run in Vienna went on for more than 700; and it enjoyed good returns on English-language productions in London (1930) and New York (1936) as well.<sup>114</sup> A brisker trade for the real-life White Horse in St. Wolfgang followed in the operetta's wake. Looking back on the profitable summer of 1932, the regional spa commission (Verband der Kurorte und Sommerfrischen des Salzkammergutes) hailed *Im weißen Rössl*'s "unpaid, but not to be underestimated, propaganda value for the Salzkammergut."<sup>115</sup> A year later, the organization attributed the "worldwide success" of Charell's operetta to a 37 percent increase in tourist traffic to St. Wolfgang.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Clarke and Peter, *Im weißen Rössl: Auf den Spuren eines Welterfolgs*, 211.

<sup>114</sup> Norbert Abels, "Operettenfinale und Weltverspottung: Das Weiße Rössl, Robert Gilbert und das Ende einer Kunstform," in *Im weißen Rössl: Zwischen Kunst und Kommerz*, ed. Ulrich Tadday (Munich: Richard Boorbeerg Verlag, 2006), 21; Richard C. Norton, "The English Language Adventures of 'Im Weißen Rössl,'" *Operetta Research Center*, September 1, 2006, <http://operetta-research-center.org/give-regards-broadway-english-language-adventures-im-weisen-rossl/>.

<sup>115</sup> "Jahresbericht 1932 des Verbandes der Kurorte und Sommerfrische des Salzkammergutes," OÖLA fond Handelskammer Linz, Schactel 40/1, VIIIg6/III, folder III, 3.

<sup>116</sup> "Tätigkeitsbericht des Verbandes der Kurorte und Sommerfrischen des Salzkammergutes des Jahres 1933," OÖLA fond Handelskammer Linz, Schactel 40/1, VIIIg6/III, folder III, 3.

## 5.9 THE GLORIFICATION OF PLACE IN *IM WEIßEN RÖßL* (1935)

It was probably only a matter of time before a film studio sought to cash in on a phenomenally popular piece of musical theater, particularly in an era when a hit song (or two) was virtually a prerequisite of a hit movie. The Austrian firm Hade-Film snagged its chance in 1935, signing the Prague-born veteran director Carl Lamač to helm the first sound film adaptation of the White Horse “franchise.” The basic plot of the film – which differs from earlier and later versions, in ways that will be discussed below – brings to mind the story structure of *Grand Hotel* in that it comprises a set of simultaneous storylines rather than a single narrative focused on one protagonist.

Lamač’s take on *Im weißen Rößl* follows Wilhelm Giesecke (Willi Schaeffers), a textile manufacturer from Berlin, during his stay at the eponymous inn at St. Wolfgang. There he is both the beneficiary of rustic Upper Austrian hospitality and the butt of many jokes poking fun at his “foreign” accent and nouveau-riche sensibilities. His storyline parallels that of Leopold Brandmayer (Hermann Thimig), the woebegone head waiter and factotum, who nurses an apparently unrequited love for the charming proprietress, Josepha Voglhuber (Christl Mardayn), sometimes referred to in contemporary descriptions with the quasi-official title Rößl-Wirtin (“Hostess/Lady of the Horse”). Josepha ignores poor Leopold while she awaits the arrival of the lawyer Dr. Siedler (Fritz Odemar), also from Berlin, who happens to be locked in a legal battle against Giesecke. The industrialist’s horror at encountering his mortal foe is doubled by having to compete with him for the last desirable room at the hotel – a problem aggravated by the will-they-won’t-they struggle between Leopold and Josepha – and then tripled when Siedler spurns Josepha for the affections of Giesecke’s perky young daughter Ottilie (Anni Markart). These crossings and re-crossings keep the characters occupied until the arrival of *Kommerzialrat* Fürst



(Theo Lingen), whom the credulous townsfolk, led by their bumbling mayor (Fritz Imhoff), mistake for royalty (the joke is that *Fürst* translates as “Prince”; *Kommerzialrat* is no more than an honorary bureaucratic title) and fête at a *Kirtag*, or church festival, which Leopold mistakes for his wedding to Josepha. Eventually, however, Josepha happily relents to Leopold’s proposal and they, along with two other freshly-minted couples, live happily ever after.

Lamač’s 1935 *Im weißen Rößl* differs from the original play (as well as from Oswald’s 1926 film version) in that it supplants Giesecke with the Josepha-Leopold duo as the main protagonist(s) and storyline. This, in turn, gives greater weight to the perspective of the Austrian “locals” over that of the guest from Berlin. Another difference is that the present is the temporal frame of reference, not the antebellum past. This is a significant distinction from the 1897 play, Charell’s operetta, and the post-WWII cinematic revival directed by Willi Forst – but consonant with Oswald’s silent film. Whereas in the Ur-Text (including the 1930 operetta) Franz Joseph I arrives to St. Wolfgang on his Imperial and Royal steamboat in order to preside over the work’s denouement, Oswald’s 1926 film version excised the role and Lamač’s edition replaces him with Fürst, a politically neutered functional equivalent whose name nonetheless playfully offers a soupçon of royalty.<sup>117</sup>

What most sets apart Lamač’s *Im weißen Rößl* from the other editions before or since is that it arrived at a peculiarly fraught moment for Austrian tourism. Whereas the 1926 film and the 1930 operetta could help spur tourist traffic from Germany, unimpeded by the Thousand Mark Blockade of 1933, the 1935 version had prodigious political forces acting against any repeat of this success. Indeed, Nazi authorities felt that the film contained too much

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<sup>117</sup> The official reason for these substitutions is unclear. Perhaps Oswald and Lamač worried that resurrecting the Kaiser was a politically sensitive issue best left out of the cinema; on the other hand, any such anxieties did not prevent other filmmakers from placing Franz Joseph on screen in the 1930s.

“objectionable” content, and had stricken from it a scene with women in bathing suits, as well as any references to the score’s Jewish composer (Bruno Granichstaedten) and any part of the score that contained “jazz.”<sup>118</sup> On the other hand, it was the first version of the text that had the advantage of coupling an internationally popular list of tunes with crisp, dramatic on-location footage. This meant, rather ironically, that Lamač’s *Im weißen Rößl* was technologically and culturally primed to be the very model of a tourism-promoting feature film – but appearing just when the largest and potentially most receptive audience, historically speaking, was least likely to pay any mind to that fact.

But while the German market was temporarily sealed off (reopening with the July Agreement in 1936), there were other tourists from German-speaking central and eastern Europe to impress. And what likely was of superior importance from a promotional standpoint was not a short-term spike in arrivals, but rather the continued long-term cultivation of a congenial image of the Salzkammergut and of Austria more broadly. Contemporary reviewers writing in Austrian periodicals, regardless of political inclination, heaped praise on *Im weißen Rößl*’s dramatic display of the landscape in and around St. Wolfgang. They appear convinced that the mere sight of the film would be nothing if not beneficial to the never-ending struggle to keep the tourists circulating. Upon visiting the set, a correspondent from *Mein Film* prophesied it would “carry our landscape and our music to the greater glory of Art and Country as the best propaganda for tourism” to wide international audience.<sup>119</sup> The left-wing daily *Kleine Blatt* predicted that it “will be appreciated as especially valuable propaganda for the Austrian landscape”<sup>120</sup> The

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<sup>118</sup> Kevin Clarke, “Gefährliches Gift: Die „authentische“ Operette und was aus ihr nach 1933 wurde,” *Operetta Research Center*, July 7, 2007, <http://operetta-research-center.org/gefahrliches-gift-die-authentische-operette-und-aus-ihr-nach-1933-wurde/>.

<sup>119</sup> Stella Wolfgang, “Das weiße Rößl am Wolfgangsee,” *Mein Film* No. 506 (1935): 6.

<sup>120</sup> “Im weißen Rößl,” *Das kleine Blatt*, December 22, 1934: 19.

government's official cinema journal, *Der gute Film*, went further: "The magnificent landscape of Lake Wolfgang, captured in exceedingly beautiful photography, makes the film for us Austrians, beyond the merry plot, an advertiser for the beauty of our country."<sup>121</sup>

Whether or not Lamač and his crew specifically intended – or were instructed – to make their turn at *Im weißen Rößl* the salutary kind of propaganda critics believed it to be remains open to investigation. Nevertheless, from a cinematographic standpoint the film seems to embrace this role enthusiastically. Not only do numerous scenes appear tailor-made for the explicit purpose of reveling in the mystique of the Salzkammergut; but, just as in *Meseautó*, they use the camera as a means of placing the viewer in the confines of that blissful vale, celebrating again and again the charmed life of the tourist.

The opening credits begin to the up-tempo fanfare of Benatzky's title song, "Im Weißen Rößl am Wolfgangsee," which sings the promise that "fortune stands before the door" of the fabled hotel. The credits – remarkable in themselves and discussed below – give way to a nine-shot sequence that builds the viewer's anticipation for the impending "arrival" at Lake Wolfgang. The first five shots lead the viewer through a kind of picture-postcard acquaintance tour of the film's eventual setting. Lake Wolfgang, the town of St. Wolfgang, and the surrounding Salzkammergut Mountains each receive a few panoramic seconds in the frame. In fact, the town appears twice, once in the foreground and once in center frame, as if to remind the viewer that he or she is, in fact, going to end up there.

The fifth shot melts into the sixth as the music shifts from the original vocal song into churning instrumental arpeggios: here the viewer, through point of view, is given a seat aboard

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<sup>121</sup> "Im weißen Rößl," *Der gute Film*, no. 156/57 (December, 1935): 8. Also, the politically "neutral" industry digest *Paimanns Filmlisten* gave *Im weißen Rößl* its second-highest rating "Almost a Hit" (*fast ein Schlager*), drawing particular attention to the on-location exterior shots. "Im weißen Rößl," *Paimanns Filmisten*, Vol. 20, no. 1024 (November, 1935): 125.

an open-air tour bus as the guide announces (in German and English) that the group has made it to the “*wunderschöner*, beautiful Wolfgangsee.” Quickly, the seventh and eighth shots present two exterior views of the bus, the latter of which shows the riders leaning with careless excitement out the windows to feast their eyes on the lake. The viewer, however, must wait for the ninth shot to share their rapture. Synchronized with the music bursting into a full-throated orchestral rendition of the theme song’s chorus, the camera crabs right across some trees, until the lake slides majestically into frame. The movie-goer has thus climbed to the apex of a brisk, but gradual climb to a viewing position from which he or she can admit: “I am in the land of the White Horse, and nowhere else.”

This grandiose, *tour de force* introduction to St. Wolfgang finds a sort of expanded reprise several scenes later when Giesecke and his daughter Otilie finally arrive in the town. Everything that made the opening sequence spectacular returns in force: the “touristy” flavor is slathered on even thicker and the Alpine gaiety ratcheted up yet higher. Father and daughter come not by bus but onboard a steamship, whose deck is jam-packed with holidaymakers and quaint, carefree “locals” in *Tracht* (folk dress) who dance to a *Ländler* version of “Im Salzkammergut, da kann man gut lustig sein” (from the operetta) played by a nattily-uniformed *Blasmusik* ensemble. As the tourists sway and the dancers spin, a guide with a bullhorn rises above the crowd to point out the mountain peaks that surround Lake Wolfgang. The necks of the tourist extras crane zealously to follow his finger; jaded Giesecke huffs in his boredom. After the camera cuts away briefly to the staff of the Weißes Rößl catching sight of the vessel and preparing for a flood of diners, the scene returns aboard for a raucous climax. The wind ensemble’s *Ländler* has been joined with a chorus singing the well-known lyrics (with harmonic counterpoint!), signaling the *Gemütlichkeit* and cozy solidarity that everyone on the ship has

found for one another. The captain waltzes with the wheel; members of the steamer's crew pop up from belowdecks to bob their heads in time; a wizened villager rocks back and forth with a young female visitor in chic urbanwear on his left and another young woman wearing a *Dirndl* on his right. The camera pans left across the line of "locals" and "strangers" and arrives triumphantly to a jump-cut of the fluttering Austrian tricolor flying on the ship – interestingly, the flag of the First Republic, not that of the *Ständestaat* – as if to brand in the viewer's consciousness a set of jolly, musical associations with the idea of the country itself.<sup>122</sup> Exactly as in the opening sequence, the viewer is placed directly within the action by what are in effect point of view shots taken on the deck of the steamer. As the ship approaches the dock located at the foot of the White Horse, the camera reaffirms the excitement and vividness of the moviegoer's virtual participation in the action with a densely-composed frame centered on the rotund tour guide presenting the hotel behind him with the hearty flourish of a carnival ringmaster

These scenes demonstrate how Lamač's interpretation of *Im weißen Rößl* was more than a mere transposition of the popular operetta from stage to film. Not only did the move to cinema allow for "real" images of the setting to substitute for painted backdrops – which Richard Oswald's 1926 silent adaptation, itself making good use of on-location photography, had already done for the original play<sup>123</sup> – but it also made it possible to immerse the viewer *within* the setting while retaining the inherent aural infectiousness of musical theater. Lamač and his colleagues took advantage of this, using a far more mobile camera than Oswald (whose shots,

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<sup>122</sup> The flag of the First Republic (1918-1934) is identical to the flag of the current Second Republic (1945-present), a simple tricolor (two red fesses at the top and bottom with a white fess in between). The flag of the *Ständestaat* (1934-1938), technically known as the Austrian Federal State (*Bundesstaat*), added to this the double-headed eagle emblem of the Holy Roman Empire with a red-white-red tricolor shield as its breast.

<sup>123</sup> One German journal remarked that "the film receives a special nuance from the pretty footage from the Salzkammergut and above all through the milieu." "Im weissen Röss'l," *Kinematograph*, no. 1020 (September, 1926): 19.

however atmospheric, generally stay within the town of St. Wolfgang, often fixed at street-level pedestrian's perspective) and deftly employing the operetta score as, by turns, incidental music, musical set-piece, and diegetic sound, as in the case of the steamship ride detailed previously. The combination proves effective in helping construct a definite sense of place: we see the natural treasures native to the Salzkammergut while we hear songs coaxing us into believing how magical they are. Indeed, the filmmakers were apparently so invested in defining the region as a tourist attraction that Ralph Benatzky composed an additional song solely for the occasion. The tune, "Salzburger Schnürlregen," is on its face an ode to the hard-driving "finger rain" that the peculiar climatic conditions in and around Salzburg cause to break unexpectedly from the sky. But it is also a wry satire on the nature of tourism-promotion. Everyplace has something that can be claimed as its specialty, and in the case of the Salzkammergut, the specialty is erratic, drenching weather formations. Josepha, owner of the White Horse, sings the song to entertain her patrons as they huddle in the hotel restaurant to escape an episode of the "beloved" thunderstorm. The second verse and chorus illustrate the spirit of the piece:

In Meissen they make porcelain, in Scotland they make gin [!!!],  
In Lapland they make cod liver oil, Marienbad makes you thin!  
The Maid comes from Orléans, from the sun comes the stroke,  
From Leuven [Löwen] comes the dandelion [Löwenzahn], and from St. Wolfgang, I!

But from Salzburg comes the blessing of the dear Finger Rain,  
Which makes a gentle plashing sound.  
Where other places they sweep the streets, we have the Finger Rain,  
That makes the road so smooth!

Other places chase after the next sensation,  
We take our attraction straight from Heaven!  
We don't have to lift a finger, we have the Finger Rain,  
That makes us famous!

Thus while Lamač's *Im weißen Rößl* was but one generation in a veritable dynasty of image-building projects for the Salzkammergut – further film adaptations appeared in 1952, 1960, 1967, and 2013, to say nothing of the stage revivals – it dutifully perpetuated the region's melodic, feel-good mystique. Such was the success of the *Im weißen Rößl* “franchise” in yoking the concept of the Salzkammergut to its musical representation that advertisements in the major daily *Neues Wiener Journal* confidently reproduced musical notation of the opening bar of Ralph Benatzky's song “Im Salzkammergut, da kann man gut lustig sein” (from the operetta score) as a way to promote tourism to the region.<sup>124</sup> This achievement survived the Second World War, with both Benatzky's score and the White Horse taken for granted as easy points of reference in postwar guidebooks.<sup>125</sup>

## 5.10 CINEMATIC SALZKAMMERGUT AND THE FANTASY OF STABILITY

To examine the construction of the Salzkammergut in mid-1930s big-budget cinema, pop music, and printed advertising as a tourist haven where “one can be really merry” (*da kann man gut*

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<sup>124</sup> Viz. *Neues Wiener Journal*, May 19, 1936.

<sup>125</sup> The introduction to one book, penned by the Federal Minister for Commerce and Reconstruction, alluded to the song “Im Salzkammergut...”, reminding readers that the region was somewhere one could “lustig sein.” Eduard Heinl, “Das Salzkammergut - die Perle Österreichs,” in *Salzkammergut*, 5th ed. (Vienna: Touristik-Verlag, 1947), 4–6. Another listed the White Horse second only to “Hallstatt Period” as the two “world-renowned terms” most associated with the Salzkammergut. Peter Iller, *Salzkammergut* (Bad Ischl: Patria-Verlag, 1947), 10.

*lustig sein*) is to address only half of what was at work in the multimedia world created by *Im weißen Rössl*. There were also, as in the case of *Meseautó* and *Lillafüred*, political questions latent within the presentation of the White Horse Inn as a rustic paradise – especially in late 1935, when the Schuschnigg regime was still confronted with the task of shoring up its domestic legitimacy in the face of relentless pressure from its Nazi archrivals. When Lamač’s film hit auditoriums, a little under two years had passed since the paroxysm of civil war and eighteen months since the assassination of Engelbert Dollfuss, architect of the *Ständesstaat*. The July Agreement, which would ostensibly stabilize relations with Germany, lay six months in the future. Upheaval and repression were, therefore, neither distant memories nor distant possibilities in Austria. In such circumstances the cinematic *Salzkammergut* became more than something to sell to tourists; it was no less a chance to sell a mystified version of “Austria” that was coherent, free of internal strife, and culturally distinct from – yet at peace with – northern Germans.

In her wide-ranging examination of masculinity and gender roles in post-Second World War Austrian film, Maria Fritsche has sought to correct the conventional practice among film scholars of categorizing “tourism films” as a subgenre of *Heimatfilm*. Fritsche argues convincingly that the two are in fact distinct genres not only because of the “crucial differences” in “visual style and narrative pattern,” but above all because of their divergent attitudes towards “modernity and tradition” and the gender orders associated with them. Whereas *Heimatfilm* dug deep into a stable version of the past to emphasize the positive social and moral rewards of tradition preserved, tourist film embraced the future and used the freedoms afforded by travel to create a rosy picture of things to come.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Maria Fritsche, *Homemade Men in Postwar Austrian Cinema: Nationhood, Genre, and Masculinity* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2013), 134–135.



Fritsche's points are well taken. But Lamač's *Im weißen Rößl* has a foot planted in both genres. Its status as a tourist film (and more specifically a hotel film) is obvious, but its interest in the *Heimat* is visually and thematically more earnest than the campiness of its operetta source material would lead one to expect. This is apparent from the opening frame, which greets the viewer with a Trachtenzug (folk-costume parade) of smiling young men and women. The participants move towards the camera as they proceed up a hillside, displaying themselves and their regalia; the standards they carry are incorporated directly into opening credits as surfaces for displaying the names of the title and principal authors (Benatzky, Lamač, the photographers, and production designers). The montage, set to a sweeping instrumental rendition of "Im 'Weißen Rößl' am Wolfgangsee," the operetta's title number, heralds the film's mood: it celebrates rural life, but not at the expense of the urban; it telegraphs a certain respect for the "authenticity" of folk traditions, albeit in a superficial manner.

Things are at their most *Heimatlich*, however, throughout the entirety of the final act, which is set during a *Kirtag*, or Catholic church festival. Here the *Heimat* emerges decisively from backdrop to center stage. Conveying images very reminiscent of Karl Köfinger's *Postkraftwagen* films (see Chapter 3), the camera adopts a pseudo-documentarian gaze as it delivers a spectacular display. Hundreds of extras dressed in *Tracht* line the thoroughfares of St. Wolfgang, waving flags as they watch the varied and colorful elements of the parade pass by: gray-haired veterans of the Imperial and Royal Army toting their regimental flag, hats tall with ostrich plumes; an honor guard wearing floppy muffin caps; maidens atop an enormous, overflowing hay-wagon followed by men swaddled in costumes of straw; a troupe of *Schuhplatter* dancers, accompanied, of course, by an ensemble of brass and woodwinds; and a ceremonial bridal pair – Josepha and Leopold – who sit at the head of a titanic marriage bed

mounted on a cart and, later, are ritually united at the steps of the church by the mayor, who is sheathed (comically) in full jousting plate.

The *Kirtag* scenes should be not be mistaken as “authentic” depictions of actually-lived Salzkammergut folk traditions; they are there to serve as beguiling illusions of the *Heimat* and its realness. On the other hand, the scenes are meant to be especially convincing in their illusions of authenticity: we are supposed to let ourselves believe that this is what a *real St. Wolfgang Kirtag* looks like, not simply apprehend it as a perfunctory dramaturgical gesture (e.g. the painted backdrops and generic costumes of a stage production) and return our attention immediately to the plot. Too much screen time, too many resources, and, crucially, too much effort from real-life locals were invested for them to have been intended as nothing more than cheap façade of rustification to go over the film’s operetta edifice. Here the *Kirtag* is the thing on display to be admired; the community of St. Wolfgang, not the billed actors, are, at least for a while, the stars of the show. Contemporary reviewers of the film, especially politically conservative ones, found in this something worthy of applause. Otto Howorka, writing for the Christian Social *Reichspost*, felt that the “participating farmers of the Salzkammergut,” along with the many landscape shots, “[testified] to the vim and vigor of the earth of the *Heimat*.”<sup>127</sup> *Der gute Film* judged the *Kirtag* scenes to have been “very deftly arranged,” though the author opined that “their operetta style dominates that of the folk art.”<sup>128</sup> (On the other hand, we should not underestimate urban audiences’ possibly exploitative desire to get a gander at the quaint world of the provincials. One industry newspaper marketed the movie to cinema operators precisely on the basis of its “picturesque folk costumes.”<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Otto Howorka, “Im weißen Rößl,” *Reichspost*, December 21, 1935: 9.

<sup>128</sup> “Im weißen Rößl,” *Der gute Film*, no. 156/57 (December, 1935): 8.

<sup>129</sup> “Die Kino-Reklame,” *Österreichische Film-Zeitung*, January 3, 1936: 3.

The film's exhibition of *Völkisch* tradition, which interwar conservatives imagined to be the greatest wellspring of stability and solidarity, helps bring to the fore its invocation of the *Heimat* for other, thematic purposes. Running through *Im weißen Rößl* are three overlapping comedic oppositions, all of which put forward St. Wolfgang and its denizens as representatives of *Heimat*. The first is the perennial tension between urban and rural. The second is the subtle juxtaposition of industrial capitalism and "traditional" family enterprise. The third is the distinction drawn between *Reich*-German culture (via Berlin) versus Austrian-German culture (via the Salzkammergut).

The plot of the work, as outlined previously, propels itself forward thanks to the invasion of idyllic St. Wolfgang by a business conflict originating in Berlin. Giesecke, manufacturer of intimate feminine garments, seeks refuge from the patent suit that the attorney Dr. Siedler has filed against him only to find that he must struggle with the same man for a room at the White Horse. This antagonism then sucks in the hotel staff as a matter of necessity, but soon enough it also spawns a parallel (if one-sided) rivalry between Siedler and the headwaiter Leopold because of Frau Josepha's professed desire for Siedler's romantic attention. Thus not only do the city-slickers drag their pecuniary disputes with them to the mountains, but one of them (unwittingly) goes so far as to endanger the future happiness of the stalwart small-town Leopold – who is all the more sympathetic because he, like so many other leading male characters of interwar and post-WWII Austrian cinema, is an aspiring composer and embodiment of the nation's musical genius.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Willi Forst's biopic of 19<sup>th</sup>-century composer Franz Schubert *Leise flehen meine Lieder* (1933) is the seminal example of the Austrian "composer-as-hero" motif, but plenty of others from the era adopted a similar tack, including *Zwei Herzen im Dreivierteltakt* (1930), *Frühjahrsparade* (1934), and *Rendezvous in Wien* (1936).

The disruptive imposition of capitalist Berlin and its squabbling would-be tycoons stands in contrast to the portrayal of the White Horse Inn. Things like patents and acrimonious legal battles are alien to its traditionalist atmosphere. Indeed, the hotel has the character of something sub-capitalist: a “mere” small business or even just an extension of the household, which survives on down-home hospitality, word-of-mouth advertising, and a loyal clientele. Crucially, its labor arrangements are paternalistic – maternalistic, as a matter of fact – and rely far more on personal connections than on the cash nexus. The only “labor struggle” that arises, or even seems capable of existing, is the broken heart Leopold suffers when it seems that his love for his employer, Frau Josepha, will remain forever unanswered. But, of course, boss and worker ultimately marry, and the White Horse secures its status as a family-oriented rather than profit-oriented enterprise.

Last, but certainly not least, we have the frequent oppositions made between Germans and Austrians – or at least between metropolitan, northern Germans and the “jus’ folks” (and Catholic) alpine Germans of the south. Giesecke and his tribulations serve as the main point of collision. Willi Schaeffers plays him to the hilt as a harried, imperious urbanite with a thick Berlin accent who faces continual difficulty communicating with the hotel staff and other locals. Undoubtedly the most famous instance of this takes place just after Giesecke and his daughter Otilie arrive in St. Wolfgang and seat themselves in the White Horse’s outdoor patio for a meal. Immediately, ethnic confusion descends on the scene in the form of the hotel menu. Leopold optimistically rattles off specialties of the house, but Giesecke grumpily fails to fully understand the waiter’s dialect as he takes his order. Undeterred, Leopold tries to tempt him with what the viewer is supposed to understand as “typically Austrian” delicacies: “Matrosenfleisch? Jungfernbraten? Zigeunergulasch?” (These translate literally as sailor meat, roast maiden, and

Gypsy goulash, respectively.) Hearing this exotic lineup brings Giesecke to scoff, “I’m not a cannibal!” The Berliner then reads the bill of fare with ever greater incomprehension and disbelief, baffled by the apparent un-Germanness of the culinary legacy of empire – “Fisolen? Karfiol? Risi bisi?!” He chortles in disgust and turns it over to Otilie, because, as he says to her, “You can speak Italian.” In turn poor Otilie gives it her best attempt but stumbles over *Beusch’l*, butchering it as “boy-oo-shull” rather than the correct “boy-shull.” Leopold intervenes to lovingly but graphically describe the process for making Beusch’l, and when the piccolo delivers a plate of it to the table, Giesecke recognizes the dish by another name – *Lunghaschee*, i.e. minced calf’s lungs and trachea blended with root vegetables – and waves it away with disdain. Thereupon Leopold loses patience and puts in for two orders of chicken paprikash (another legacy of empire), presuming *that* to be unobjectionable to German tastes.

The play on northern-Germanness vs. southern-Germanness is a core element of the original *Im weißen Rößl* text; the gags about food seem to be an indispensable part of every successive version. However, the immediate political context of the 1935 version raised the stakes on the potential importance of this good-hearted ethnic lampoonery. In the first place, the existence of an independent Austrian state had been controversial since before the soil had even settled on the grave of the Habsburg Empire. Austria’s original postwar form was the Republic of German-Austria, so declared by a group of German members of the Imperial Assembly (Reichsrat) on November 12, 1918, with the intention that the German-speaking remainder of the empire would attach itself to Germany. However, the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye rejected this act of national self-determination, more or less openly on the grounds that no successor state of the defeated Central Powers – and especially not a potentially-resurgent Germany – should gain any strategic advantages from the conclusion of peace. This satisfied nobody but the

French, particularly not in Austria, where the new state's inhabitants suffered from its permanently precarious economic situation and apparently "illogical" assembly from the scraps of the old empire.

Thus the prospect of Anschluss, or union, with Germany was widely favored in Austrian political circles until the Nazis' ascent to power in 1933 changed Germany's basic nature. Austrian National Socialists and German nationalists would have liked nothing more. But neither the dominant Christian Socials, nor now the Social Democrats, who no longer had a progressive Weimar state to dream of, were interested in joining Hitler's Third Reich. The Austrian Nazis attempted to force the issue in the summer of 1934 by launching a putsch against Dollfuss; but Mussolini, not yet ready to embrace an alliance with Germany, vowed to defend Austrian autonomy, and the insurgents succeeded only in murdering the chancellor. Yet this outcome had by no means foreclosed the possibility of invasion, and a significant portion of the Austrian population remained actively in favor of union, with or without the use of force.<sup>131</sup>

Furthermore, St. Wolfgang, along with the city and state of Salzburg not far to the west, lay in what might be considered a contested "border zone" between Germany and Vienna. It was not for nothing that the *Ständesstaat* adopted the annual Salzburg Festival as a means of proclaiming the inviolability – and superiority – of Austrian culture.<sup>132</sup> To the east was Linz, which before 1934 had been a "bastion of Social Democracy" and was on its way towards

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<sup>131</sup> On the interwar politics of Anschluss: Stanley Suval, *The Anschluss Question in the Weimar Era: A Study of Nationalism in Germany and Austria, 1918-1932* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974); Alfred D. Low, *The Anschluss Movement, 1931-1938, and the Great Powers* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1985); Evan Burr Bukey, *Hitler's Hometown: Linz, Austria, 1908-1945* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986); Julie Thorpe, *Pan-Germanism and the Austrofascist State, 1933-38* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2011).

<sup>132</sup> Michael P. Steinberg, *The Meaning of the Salzburg Festival: Austria as Theater and Ideology, 1890-1938* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990).

becoming a “stronghold of National Socialism,” not least of all because, as “Hitler’s hometown,” it received special attention from the Nazis.<sup>133</sup>

So while audiences had always laughed at the Berliner Giesecke’s phonemic foibles and his dismay over the unrefined Austrian palate, in an era when threats loomed across the border and the Thousand Mark Blockade prevailed – which, in reality, was explicitly designed to prevent a Giesecke from coming to St. Wolfgang altogether – such jokes also threatened a raw nerve. On the other hand, spoofing the cultural incompatibilities between Austrians and Germans may have been intended to provide domestic audiences a kind of satisfying affirmation of their own brand of Germanness. Contemporary Austrian reviewers found the *Im weißen Rößl*’s language games to be both true-to-life and enjoyable.<sup>134</sup> Indeed, they seem to have shared a keen appreciation for all the ways that the film contrasted tourists and locals, particularly during the *Kirtag* scenes.<sup>135</sup> *Der gute Film* praised Lamač for “highlight[ing] the elements of farce with the rewarding opposition between town and country, Berlin versus St. Wolfgang.”<sup>136</sup>

Ultimately, while the Salzkammergut of *Im weißen Rößl* is populated with “authentic” burghers and peasants, whose reality overflows in every frame of the *Kirtag* scenes, it is at heart a fantasyland, because its oppositions – town and country, boss and worker, Germany and Austria – are all either safely dissipated in laughter or tidily resolved through the all-powerful Happy Ending. The urban invaders reconcile, their antagonisms stifled by a romantic atmosphere. Giesecke’s brusque snobbery capitulates to the St. Wolfgangers’ invincible hospitality: when all is said and done, their *Heimat* welcomes Germanness of every stripe, regardless of whatever ethnic differences separate a Salzkammergutler from a Berliner. The

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<sup>133</sup> Bukey, *Hitler’s Hometown: Linz, Austria, 1908-1945*, xiv.

<sup>134</sup> Otto Howorka, “Im weißen Rößl,” *Reichspost*, December 21, 1935: 9.

<sup>135</sup> “Im weißen Rößl,” *Paimanns Filmisten*, Vol. 20, no. 1024 (November, 1935): 125.

<sup>136</sup> “Im weißen Rößl,” *Der gute Film*, no. 156/57 (December, 1935): 8.

Austrian-German conflict existing in the real, political world of 1935 thus becomes trivialized away: in the words of operetta scholar Norbert Abels, “The Prussian occupation is restricted to the tourist season.”<sup>137</sup> For its part, Austrian identity, which comes through in the film mainly as what “Berlin” is not (and conveniently Vienna is out of the frame entirely), emerges as a zesty, uncontested alpine *Gemütlichkeit* rooted in an urban-friendly *Heimat*.

It is worth pointing out that this image of St. Wolfgang, full of warmth and welcome, contrasts with the barren demography of *Meseautó*’s Lillafüred. In that film, there are no locals; Lillafüred is virtually free from the lower classes, who are at most merely alluded to in an offhanded comment that aestheticizes them as part of the picturesque. (This occurs when Vera and Szűcs, still pretending to be a chauffeur, look over the hotel ramparts to the village below, Szűcs drolly gestures that the houses remind him of “teeny-tiny boxes.”) The absence of lower-class Hungarians emphasizes that the Palotaszálló is above the status of *Heimat* and, more to the point, reinforces the fantasy that it is free from the conflicts and problems that stem from the existence of the rural poor – despite the real-life efforts of the socialist press to draw them back into the scenery. In *Im weißen Rössl*, on the other hand, the White Horse is planted deeply in the *Heimat*, and, indeed, utterly buried by it in the *Kirtag* scenes. Whereas in *Meseautó* it is expedient to the fantasy of the place to delete the impoverished Hungarian peasant from the frame, in *Im weißen Rössl* the opposite is true. The harmoniousness and Catholic religiosity of peasant life is to be celebrated, so that the Reich-German visitors are willingly conquered by it.

In its mystification as a tourist Mecca, its magical ability to neutralize conflict, and its role as epitome of the “homeland,” the 1935 *Im weißen Rössl*’s Salzkammergut is the peer of *Meseautó*’s Lillafüred. It is true that in the case of the former some of these traits are rooted in

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<sup>137</sup> Abels, “Operettenfinale und Weltverspottung,” 21.



the work's pre-1918 textual origins, as well as its debt to Erik Charell and Ralph Benatzky's famous operetta.<sup>138</sup> But it was not through sheer coincidence alone that both regions took on the level of cultural significance they did, when they did. For those in their respective societies who were receptive to such things, both the cinematic Lillafüred and the cinematic Salzkammergut offered refuge in fairytale lands full of dreams come true and devoid of conflict – and, for those in power, offered pleasing ideal images of the nation to market at home and abroad.

## 5.11 CONCLUSIONS

A number of films could claim themselves heirs to the estates of *Meseautó* and *Im weißen Rößl*. The former spawned many knock-offs in its own day, as well as a critically reviled remake as late as 2000. The latter was reincarnated in a well-known 1952 postwar turn from the prolific Willi Forst, as well as less successful modernizations in 1960 and 2013. But direct descent is not everything when it comes to finding a proper spiritual successor. That honor may belong to a wholly unexpected and indeed unwitting candidate – Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014).

Certain aspects of *Grand Budapest* reflect conscious decisions on Anderson's part for the film to look like something out of the interwar period. He has cited the works of directors making their way as exiles in Hollywood, namely Ernst Lubitsch and Emeric Pressburger, for influences in creating the fictionalized vision of post-imperial east-central Europe represented in

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<sup>138</sup> Moritz Csáky, who memorably wrote on the “ideology” of the Golden Age of operettas in the late empire, points out that operettas have often served as safe spaces in which to make fun of social and political conflict without entering the dangerous realm of “serious” critique. Moritz Csáky, *Ideologie der Operette und Wiener Moderne: Ein kulturhistorischer Essay*, 2nd ed. (Vienna: Böhlau, 1998), 70–74.

the country of Zubrowka (which, although Anderson is not on record saying so, could only have its namesake in the Polish bison-grass vodka brand Żubrówka).<sup>139</sup> One of the central cinematographic conceits of *Grand Budapest* is the way it matches its four “nested” story timelines (the present day, 1985, 1968, and 1932) with their appropriate film aspect ratios.<sup>140</sup> The frames that take place in the 1930s are, in part, of the visual atmosphere of the 1930s; they “feel” to the viewer much as a frame from *Meseautó* might. Furthermore, certain 1932 scenes – set in train cabins, no less! – are shot in black and white, and uncannily look for all the world as though they had wandered out of obscure interwar/wartime features like *Az új rokon* [The New Relative] (1934) or *Reisebekanntschaft* [Travel Acquaintance] (1943).

What draws *Meseautó* and *Im weißen Rössl* closest to *Grand Budapest*, though, is the way that all of them exalt their hotels. The Palotaszálló, the White Horse, and the Grand Budapest are, each in their own way, structures that stand enveloped by the same post-imperial circumstances yet stand apart from them as utopian manifestations of how a better version of history might have played out. In its glamour and devotion to aristocratic notions of customer service the Grand Budapest is the kind of establishment that the Palotaszálló desperately aspired to be; the same variety of cobblestone alpine charisma permeates the Salzkammergut as it does the Grand Budapest’s “Sudetenwaltz.” This is no mistake, for the Grand Budapest is in its design and its filming locations very definitely a product of actual central Europe. Yet in truth *Grand Budapest*’s real fairytale land is not so much a geographical territory as a temporal space. It is a twilight past, where the real history of central Europe and a stereotyped (the “*Reader’s Digest*

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<sup>139</sup> Matt Zoller Seitz, “The 7,269-Word First Interview,” in *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, by Matt Zoller Seitz (New York: Abrams, 2015), 32.

<sup>140</sup> For a detailed analysis, see David Bordwell, “Wes Anderson Takes the 4:3 Challenge,” in *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (New York: Abrams, 2015), 237–49.

version”<sup>141</sup>), indeed precious and often absurd pastry chef’s fantasia on that history cohabitate harmoniously. As long as the redoubtable Monsieur Gustave wards over it, the hotel is a bastion of earlier times unthreatened by war and fascism – a “faint glimmer of civilization left in this barbaric slaughterhouse that was once known as humanity.”

In its origins *The Grand Budapest Hotel* is nothing less than Wes Anderson’s tribute to the Viennese author Stefan Zweig, who, alongside Joseph Roth, was one of the greatest eulogists of the late Habsburg world. The film reflects Anderson’s attempt to project on screen Zweig’s melancholic recollections of antebellum Europe and literary self-isolation from the depravity of what was for him a post-imperial nightmare. According to George Prochnik, one recent biographer of Zweig, he has succeeded prodigiously. In his interview of Anderson published in a volume containing excerpts from some of Zweig’s best-known works, Prochnik told the director, “I thought your film did a beautiful job of transposing Stefan Zweig’s actual life into the dream life of his stories, and the stories in the fabric of his actual life. You showed how deeply implicated they were in one another—not in the sense that Zweig was necessarily writing about his own experiences, but in the way his own experiences had a fairy-tale dimension, confectionary and black by turns. This dream-like aspect of his work and existence seem central to understanding him.”<sup>142</sup>

Anderson’s choice to reconstruct interwar east-central Europe from Zweig’s oeuvre, and especially to do so in his (in)famously meticulous cinematic style, is one burdened from the start with the fateful bargain of sacrificing “real” history at the altar of one man’s personal memory. The choice has drawn fire from some quarters not only for being void of any genuine substance,

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<sup>141</sup> This is Wes Anderson’s own description. Seitz, “The 7,269-Word First Interview,” 34.

<sup>142</sup> “A Conversation with Wes Anderson,” in *The Society of the Crossed Keys: Selections from the Writings of Stefan Zweig*, by Stefan Zweig (London: Pushkin Press, 2014), 9.

but, one senses, for being so glib in its handling of fascism as to be irresponsibly amoral. Eileen Jones, a film critic writing for the socialist journal *Jacobin*, takes a dim view of *Grand Budapest* as a vapid and philosophically bankrupt bit of formalist narcissism. She takes particular issue with Anderson's twee, hyper-aestheticized treatment of history that makes no serious distinction between the Old Europe epitomized in Monsieur Gustave, the film's Nazi stand-ins (the Zig-Zag Battalion, clearly riffing on the Waffen-SS), or the Communist era that comprises one of the film's temporal layers. Although Anderson places his characters in an "Eastern Europe as a baroque Neverland still embedded in a comically aristocratic nineteenth-century past," for Jones, all places and times are, in the final analysis, located in "Wes-world." Either unaware of or uninterested in *Grand Budapest's* basis in the life and work of Stefan Zweig, Jones passes sentence on the work as the moment when "Anderson... reached the dizzying point of fantasizing about feeling nostalgic for nostalgia itself, for the purer strain of heartsick longing that was presumably felt once upon a time."<sup>143</sup>

Jones's critique of the way Anderson presents the history of oppressive regimes is reasonable: Adrien Brody and Willem Dafoe's roles as utterly cartoonish Zig-Zag goons, for instance, are not so much lampoon attacks on the Nazis as their conversion into toy versions of fascists, perfectly fitting the dollhouse logic that governs Anderson's cinematic cosmos. But her takedown of *Grand Budapest's* nostalgia misunderstands the world it tries to create and underestimates the debt it owes to its source material. We *can* presume that the "heartsick longing" was felt "once upon a time," because it belonged to Stefan Zweig – and, as this dissertation has tried to illuminate, to other individuals of post-Habsburg Austria and Hungary who felt history had robbed them of once-familiar places and principles. Many of them revisited

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<sup>143</sup> Eileen Jones, "Wes Anderson and the Old Regime," *Jacobin*, March 18, 2014, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/03/wes-anderson-and-the-old-regime/>.

what they were missing by means of the virtual travel – through time as well as place – of the cinema. While *Meseautó* and *Im weißen Rößl* are in many ways profoundly different from Zweig's creations, they, too, projected visions of life after empire that offered solace, however fantastical or ideologically troubling. At a certain moment in his interview with Wes Anderson, George Prochnik nicely summarizes this impulse as he muses on a line from the end of *Grand Budapest*.<sup>144</sup> Prochnik uses the moment as an opportunity to observe of the film in general, "There is the suggestion that the whole thing is a feat of imagination. I think this resonates with the embrace of illusion in *The World of Yesterday* [Zweig's 1942 memoir]. It gets away from the idea that Zweig was just unable to see reality, and moves more towards the notion that he just had a huge desire to live in the imagination so fully that it would diminish the impact of the real."<sup>145</sup> On this point Zweig and the passengers of the Dream Car shared something significant; and their visions ultimately arrived to a fairytale at the Grand Hotel.

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<sup>144</sup> The line is spoken by Mr. Moustafa, the aged version of the lobby boy Zero who had been Monsieur Gustave's protégé and heir, as he delivers one final word of eulogy on his old mentor. "To be frank, I think *his* world had vanished long before he ever entered it – but, I will say: he certainly sustained the illusion with a marvelous grace!" As reproduced in the version of the screenplay published in Wes Anderson, *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (New York: Opus, 2014), 149.

<sup>145</sup> "A Conversation with Wes Anderson," 26.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

Research on this project began in earnest with my arrival to Vienna on July 4, 2011. Within hours of touching down at Schwechat, I turned on the television in my apartment in Landstrasse – where, Metternich is said to have snarled, Asia once began – to learn that Otto von Habsburg, a.k.a. Archduke Otto of Austria, the last Crown Prince of his dynasty, had died. What this portended for the future of my dissertation, at that stage still only nebulously aware of the legacy of Otto's extinct empire, I could not say. The immediate consequences, however, were vividly clear. Otto was given an honorary state funeral, his cortege winding its way through the city to the Kapuzinergruft, the tomb of his ancestors. There he would lie beside the bodies of the once-reigning monarchs whose ghostly hands, with greater or lighter grips, touched upon many of the events described in the previous pages. Yes; his body would stay in the tomb of the emperors and empresses, but part of him would be transferred to Pannonhalma Abbey in northwest Hungary. Though there had not been a Dual Monarchy for nearly 93 years, its final scion quite literally went to eternity with Vienna on his mind and his heart lost to the Magyars. (His great-great aunt Elisabeth, ever solicitous of the Hungarians, would have been proud.)

Looking back, it is difficult to judge whether Otto's funeral procession along the Ringstrasse (which my friend and colleague Jon Sherry and I witnessed up-close from our vantage point across from the State Opera) was a moving tribute to a lost age, an extravagant display of municipal nostalgia, or a bizarre and tragicomic merger of the two. Hundreds, perhaps

thousands of what I could think of only as “Habsburg reenactors” marched in the train. Some wore military uniforms from myriad regiments back through the centuries. Shakos, muskets, halberds, and of course ostrich feathers<sup>1</sup> glinted and baked in the dry July heat. Though my knowledge of imperial costume was (and remains) spotty, I was able to pick out Hungarian *huszárs*, Slovene *Grenzer*, and Croatian pandurs. There were at least several brass bands; surely one of them had played the Radetzky March. It was, in all, as though I had stepped back into the pageantry described in Daniel Unowsky’s earlier books – except, naturally, there was no paternalist crowned head to venerate, and no vulnerable imperial structure to defend.<sup>2</sup> It seemed to make only too much sense that I could turn around and see young men, dressed in the vaguely Mozartian costumes of noon-time-concert ticket-hawkers, snap photos on their smartphones of a remarkable phenomenon that dwarfed the comparative restraint of the commodified historical memory they were paid to embody.

Nearly five years and one dissertation later, I am compelled to reflect on the spectacle of Otto von Habsburg’s funeral parade in light of the post-imperial 1920s and 1930s that my research has uncovered. One of the things that I find most striking is the commitment of the reenactors – my contemporaries – to dressing up as accurately as possible in tribute to an empire that now only a tiny and dwindling few can remember from direct experience. These reenactors, who must have paid liberally for their elaborate drag, could only imagine the real life *and* the true absence of the Habsburg monarchy. The empire they imagined was all a mirage cast by the heat of dedicated historical research. Things were different for the Austrians and Hungarians

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted – if that is the right word – to Christopher Clark and his book for fixing the image of “gaudy green ostrich feathers” in my mind as a symbol of the late Habsburg Empire. Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013), xxvii.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel L. Unowsky, *The Pomp and Politics of Patriotism: Imperial Celebrations in Habsburg Austria, 1848-1916* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2005); Daniel Unowsky and Laurence Cole, eds., *The Limits of Loyalty: Imperial Symbolism, Popular Allegiances, and State Patriotism in the Late Habsburg Monarchy* (New York: Berghahn, 2007).

who appear this thesis, however. To them the memory and legacy of the empire posed questions to their social and cultural realities. That legacy was not quite distant enough a past to be worn and cast off as a voluntary costume; it was still being lived in.

## 6.1 THE POST-IMPERIAL MOMENT

Interwar Viennese shared the experience of being post-imperial not only with Salzburgers and Tirolers, Budapesters and Transylvanians, Praguers and Rijekans, Cracovians and Bukovinians, and others who had dwelled in the Habsburgs' "large house with many doors and many rooms for many different kinds of people";<sup>3</sup> but also with Varsovians, Muscovites, Samarans, Baghdadis, Damascenes, Istanbulites, and Dubliners. The First World War and its consequences were events hemispherical, if not global in scope. While, geopolitically speaking, it is natural to think of the venerable European dynasties of central, eastern, and southern Europe as its primary victims, John Darwin reminds us they "marked the breakdown of the *ancien régime* across Eurasia," that "the war had become the graveyard of empires, European and Asian."<sup>4</sup> The breakup of the Ottoman realm and the transfer of some of its parts to British and French administration created, in many respects, the modern Middle East. There are parallels between the confused, contentious drawing of new "national" borders there, designed clandestinely in the heat of wartime diplomacy through the Constantinople (1915) and Sykes-Picot (1916) Agreements, and the borders of east-central Europe, which were set to a considerable extent by

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<sup>3</sup> Joseph Roth, "The Bust of the Emperor," in *The Collected Stories of Joseph Roth*, trans. Michael Hoffmann (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), 247.

<sup>4</sup> John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Global History of Empire Since 1405* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008), 369.



the secret Treaty of London (1915) and special pacts made with nationalist pressure groups (e.g. the Czecho-Slovak National Council).<sup>5</sup> Further east, a short-lived attempt at dynastic revival under the Hongxian emperor (1915-1916) piled on a further challenge to the young Republic of China. Even the British Empire was not insulated from this post-imperial moment. Sinn Féin in Ireland, the Wafd Party in Egypt, and the Non-Cooperation movement in India each in their own way contributed to advancing a new political order that did not take formal empires for granted.<sup>6</sup>

From the heights of this global view, the lives and accomplishments of the Austrian and Hungarian tourists, tourism promoters, and moviegoers examined in this dissertation reflect but a tiny fraction of those affected directly by the collapse of empires brought down by the tremors of the First World War. They help us see, nonetheless, what cultural and social elements of the Habsburg world proved durable enough to stay standing, or, if shaken loose, so retained their shape as to be useful in the work of identity-construction that followed.

In the first place, such an investigation shows how the common economic network and tourism patterns developed in Austria-Hungary after 1867 continued to connect the two political core regions of the empire even after the hyphen between their names had been replaced by an international frontier. From a certain distance, this fact is not surprising: one need only consult a railway map of the Dual Monarchy in 1914 to be able to predict that Vienna and Budapest could not carry on a detached existence for very long. Less expected, however, is the extent to which

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<sup>5</sup> The Treaty of London promised Italy (and Serbia, which was not a signatory) territorial spoils in exchange for joining the war on the side of the Entente. These included South Tyrol and extensive portions of the Adriatic coastline, which would have come at the expense of Austria-Hungary. By 1918 almost all of these pledges had been revoked (with the notable exception of South Tyrol) and became the basis of Italian irredentist claims thereafter. The Czecho-Slovak National Council was formed during the war as a means of organizing Czech and, eventually, Slovak nationalist activism in Entente countries. In the summer of 1918, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States promoted the Council to the status of provisional government of a putative Czechoslovakia, with Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk as president. Zara Steiner, *The Lights That Failed: European International History 1919-1933* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 86–87; Lonnie R. Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends*, 3rd ed. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 168–172.

<sup>6</sup> Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Global History of Empire Since 1405*, 369.

Budapest still depended on its rival imperial seat. Nor might have one forecasted the amount of energy that Austrian and Hungarian tourism promoters invested in trying to accommodate each other, given the jealousy and zero-sum mentality inherent in the continental tourism economy of the 1930s. Though lacking the old dynastic glue, and in spite of decades of nationalist rumblings about “Habsburg oppression” or “Magyar perfidiousness,” the idea of Austro-Hungarian friendship evidently possessed enough vitality to seem a viable commercial strategy – and even, to a limited degree, a political one, in the short window between 1930 and 1938.

Second, the activities and anxieties of tourism promoters in post-imperial Austria and Hungary betray much about the persistence of concepts of “homeland” deeply ingrained by the Habsburg dynastic constitutional system (or absence thereof). For Hungarian promoters and nationalist pundits, the imperatives of the domestic travel industry and the crisis of national identity after the upheavals and border changes of 1918-1920 were trapped together in a nefarious feedback loop. The boundaries of their kingdom shrank, it seemed to them, because neglectful Hungarians did not “know” what national contents they held; but the internal distinctions of those contents – i.e. diversity among versions of “Hungarianness” – never seemed to matter as much as the sanctity of the boundaries. This perspective was consistent with nationalist attitudes after the Compromise of 1867, namely that the largely autonomous Hungarian central state adopted (albeit fitfully and ultimately unsuccessfully) the mission of Magyarizing and “civilizing” the people in its charge. It was, naturally, also entirely consistent with the irredentism of the Horthy era: the homeland was defined by its “correct” historical shape, and there could be no justice for Hungary until there was, literally, a return to form.

Austrian promoters exhibited none of the panic of their Hungarian counterparts. For them, the homeland was the *Heimat*, a place of intense, intimate specificity – but also capable of

expanding to encompass, or at least share in, the collectivity of all the *Heimats* of Austria, indeed all of Germandom. This made the construction of a fixed and unified “Austrian” identity difficult, even undesirable. On the other hand, it imbued local and regional identities with considerable resilience; it was the logical outcome of an imperial arrangement in which each province was joined with the others through its individual relationship to the dynast. When the homeland was never anything *but* personal, there was little room for anyone to be ignorant of it in the way that Hungarians were supposed to have been.

## **6.2 THE INTERWAR AS THE INTER-IMPERIAL: AUSTRIA AND GERMANY**

In illuminating the conceptions of “homeland” at work in 1920s-1930s Austria and Hungary, this dissertation also exposes how some cultural and political reactions to the end of one empire were bound up with political ambitions to reassert empire in other forms. The first of these was the sudden return to relevance of an old idea: that the many *Heimats* of the German *Volk* properly belonged in a single “Greater Germany” (Großdeutschland). The second was a revanchist, not to say expansionist Hungary whose leaders dreamt of restoring the country’s borders to their prewar limits and would be willing to join forces with a continental power that could aid them in this quest. It might be said, therefore, that especially in Austria, but also in Hungary and indeed much, if not all, of east-central Europe, the post-imperial overlapped with the *pre*-imperial and the interwar was just as much the *inter*-imperial.

The ambiguities of the *Heimat* in interwar Austria as examined in Chapters 3 and 5 are one way in which this dissertation offers a connection between Austrian history in the narrowest

sense and German history, that is the study of German-speakers, in the broadest. But in so doing, it highlights just how messy, how protean are the distinctions among “German” peoples and “German” states. Within the bounds of “German history,” the position of the chimeric entity “Austria” vis-à-vis the only somewhat less fluid “Germany” has long been a subject of great contention among scholars<sup>7</sup> – let alone among nationalists, racists, and empire-builders. The fact that the concept of *Heimat* by turns defies and embraces both local granularity and global solidarity (i.e. one particular German-speaking place vs. all German-speaking places everywhere) helps explain post-imperial Austrians’ ambivalent attitudes towards the polities they lived in. The *Heimat* can stay the *Heimat* whether it is part of a dynastic empire, a federal republic, an authoritarian “society of estates,” or a National Socialist *Reich*. It can either plausibly “belong” within any of those, or it can be alien to them – or both at the same time.

Austrian history from the fall of the Habsburgs until the Anschluss is inter-imperial in two main respects. First, it describes a set of conditions in which Austria was, chronologically speaking and from the perspective of hindsight, literally between empires, in almost exactly the same way we use the term “interwar.” Arguably, this might be less meaningful than calling the period “post-imperial,” since Austria’s tenure in the Holy Roman Empire and its leading position in the Habsburg *Reich* was over one hundred times longer and profoundly more influential than its career as the Nazi Ostmark. Nor should we mistake the eventual outcome of Hitler’s temporary “success,” so much the product of unforeseen crises and contingencies, as any more inevitable than the war that followed. Nevertheless, it is a fact, and its consequences on Austria (and Europe) after 1938 should not be underestimated.

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<sup>7</sup> John W. Boyer, “Some Reflections on the Problem of Austria, Germany, and Mitteleuropa,” *Central European History* 22, no. 3/4 (1989): 301–305.

Second, it reflects the active designs of certain political forces that strove to restore imperial hegemony to the region and which, as it happened, won out. Pro-Anschluss supporters in both Austria and Germany looked forward to the day when the two states could be united and the German *Reich* expanded. Any separate Austrian republic, by this logic, represented a transitional state between two empires. The abdication of the Habsburg and Hohenzollern dynasties in 1918 breathed new life into the *großdeutsch/kleindeutsch* debates of 1848 and 1866-71. In the erstwhile monarchies' German-speaking regions – now joined in defeat as they had only months earlier been “shoulder-to-shoulder” in war – politicians and intellectuals of all stripes hailed the prospect of a *großdeutsch* state as the best and most obvious solution to their imminent woes.<sup>8</sup> After the Allies forbade Anschluss, Pan-German parties in both countries – and until 1933, Austrian socialists as well – kept the fires burning.<sup>9</sup> Ignaz Seipel, chancellor (1922-24), foreign minister (1926-29), and leader of the “anti-republican” wing of the Austrian Christian Socials, asserted that Austrians were nothing if not “big-state people” (*Großstaatsmenschen*).<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the notion that Austria had lost its empire but retained its world-historical “mission” to mediate and civilize central Europe – or even that this mission was the country’s defining feature as a successor state – animated Catholic conservative thinkers and politicians throughout the entire period.<sup>11</sup> And, not least of all, the absorption of Austria as the

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<sup>8</sup> Jörg Brechtefeld, *Mitteleuropa and German Politics: 1848 to the Present* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 48.

<sup>9</sup> The classic study is Andrew G. Whiteside, *The Socialism of Fools: Georg Ritter von Schönerer and Austrian Pan-Germanism* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1975). For the 1930s see Julie Thorpe, *Pan-Germanism and the Austrofascist State, 1933-38* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Thorpe, *Pan-Germanism and the Austrofascist State, 1933-38*, 30.

<sup>11</sup> Anton Staudinger, “Austrofaschistische ‘Österreich’-Ideologie,” in *Austrofaschismus: Politik - Ökonomie - Kultur, 1933-1938*, ed. Emmerich Tálos and Wolfgang Neugebauer (Vienna: LIT Verlag, 2005), 28–52.

final act of annihilating the Habsburg monarchy was high on Hitler's to-do list, one of the first steps in forging a millennial empire.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, apart from the “appropriateness” of a single national state from the Pan-German perspective, unification would have brought together two states composed of provinces with representative bodies and strong identities of their own. Germany and Austria were two lands of many German *Heimats*, separated by a political border – a border that very many on both sides of it believed should be dissolved. On paper, this seemed compatible; in practice, it was not. But in the interim, the sense that each *Heimat* shared in a common *Deutschtum* with all the rest almost certainly helped make union more enticing than independence.

When the Anschluss came, very many Austrians were ready to accept it – some ecstatically, some with quiet resignation. Until fairly recently, mainstream traditions in Austrian historical memory considered the period between the Anschluss and the fall of the National Socialist régime to be a forgettable aberration, or indeed a time of outright subjugation by a “foreign” power.<sup>13</sup> Austria was “Hitler's first victim,” the first country consigned to immolation on the altar of appeasement. What “normal” Austrians did during that time was done under duress, and “a few bad apples” were responsible for the really evil stuff; Jews and others wiped out by targeted violence were folded voicelessly into a clamoring that just about everyone had been wronged.<sup>14</sup> However, as much as this forgettery made it bearable to live with the experiences and consequences of the *NS-Zeit* (the Era of National Socialism), after 1945 Austrians were hard-pressed to explain away the jubilant throngs that greeted their new Führer,

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<sup>12</sup> Shelley Baranowski, *Nazi Empire: German Colonialism and Imperialism from Bismarck to Hitler* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 138.

<sup>13</sup> Steven Beller, *A Concise History of Austria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 231–232; Anthony Bushell, *Polemical Austria: The Rhetorics of National Identity: From Empire to the Second Republic* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), 168–169.

<sup>14</sup> Margarete Lamb-Faffelberger, “Beyond ‘The Sound of Music’: The Quest for Cultural Identity in Modern Austria,” *The German Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (2003): 289–99.

the shots *not* fired in resistance, in March 1938.<sup>15</sup> At the time, however, it was possible even to see Anschluss as a *victory* for Austria. Not long after the end of the war, A.J.P. Taylor remarked:

...Hitler's occupation of Vienna in March, 1938 was an act of national liberation for the inhabitants of "Austria"; it freed them from the last relics of the Habsburgs and united them with their national state. Hitler was not merely Austria's greatest gift to the German people: he was the triumph of Austrian policy and Austria's revenge for the defeat of 1866. Prussia became the prisoner of Vienna... [Hitler] brought into German politics a demagoguery peculiarly Viennese. The Reich which he created to last for a thousand years was nothing more than the 'Empire of seventy millions' projected by Bruck in 1850, and warded off by Bismarck in 1866.<sup>16</sup>

Yet Austrians soon found ample reasons to question the nature of their return to empire. On this point, too, the history of tourism throws light on wider cultural and social attitudes. Affordable group trips available through the popular Strength through Joy (Kraft durch Freude, or KdF) program, lent a hand in legitimating the Anschluss and the Nazi regime in general. Early on, "enterprising villagers and peasants" profited from the sudden influx of "endless busloads" of visitors eager to partake in relaxation, winter sports, and *Gemütlichkeit*.<sup>17</sup> Austrian industrial workers, for their part, took advantage of KdF junkets to experience tourism for the first time on

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<sup>15</sup> Evan Burr Bukey, *Hitler's Austria: Popular Sentiment in the Nazi Era, 1938-1945* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 25–39. On the "linguistic ingenuity" deployed in response to the Anschluss in subsequent Austrian historical memory, see: Bushell, *Polemical Austria*, 170.

<sup>16</sup> A.J.P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918: A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary* (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1965), 258. Note that the original edition appeared in 1948.

<sup>17</sup> Bukey, *Hitler's Austria*, 124–125.

“breathtaking holidays never to be forgotten—or repeated.”<sup>18</sup> But in this arena, too, the post-Anschluss honeymoon was briefer than expected. Tensions between the economic benefits of inclusion in Hitler’s empire and the social friction they caused, pulled taut by a leisure program designed to heighten racial solidarity, only helped underscore the differences between Austrians and Reich Germans. So great was the onrush of comparatively more affluent travelers from the north that soon enough rural Austrians grew resentful of the clamor, pollution, and infrastructural strain they brought with them, as well their habit of greedily “foraging” for hard-to-get consumer goods at prices the poorer Austrians could not match.<sup>19</sup> The imperious attitudes of the Reich party élite, which had reshaped the Austrian party in its image, seemed to have been mirrored by their vacation-seeking counterparts. “Visitors from the Reich tended to view the Ostmark as a Nazi Disneyland, an Alpine paradise of holiday resorts, soothing music, and good food. The problem was that few Austrians thought they were living in a theme park, especially in wartime.”<sup>20</sup>

Movie-going, too, helped spread cracks in the imposing façade of Pan-German nationalism. Despite the National Socialist regime’s notorious zeal in harnessing the cinema as a vehicle for propaganda, its control over film was not so absolute as to prevent all forms of artistic subversion. Cinema became, in fact, another important means of asserting a distinct Austrian identity in defiance of the administrative abolition of “Austria” and its traditional provinces. The movies produced by the studio Wien-Film (the interwar Tobis-Sascha firm in its Nazified form),

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 86. For KdF as a prop of the National Socialist state as a whole, particularly among the working class, see: Shelley Baranowski, *Strength through Joy: Consumerism and Mass Tourism in the Third Reich* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 196–197.

<sup>19</sup> Bukey, *Hitler’s Austria*, 124–125.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 199.



above all those directed by Willi Forst, pointedly highlighted the distinctiveness of Viennese culture and thus “managed to provide a subtle resistance to the dictates of Nazi socioculture.”<sup>21</sup>

For all the charges of weakness and incoherence leveled against it, the specter of a distinct “Austrian” identity was evidently threatening enough to the Nazis’ state-building project. Austria received the title of Ostmark, a throwback to the anti-Slav/anti-Magyar buffer zone of the medieval Ottonian empire; its *Länder* were recast as seven NSDAP-defined *Reichsgaue*. But these calculated attempts to efface centuries-old geographic expressions yielded, at most, an unconvincing palimpsest. “Greater German solidarities could not be forged as quickly as Hitler hoped,” observes Mark Mazower, “nor by his methods.”<sup>22</sup> The familiar lines in people’s mental geographies remained and their provincial prejudices continued to thrive. In short, the traditional sense of *Heimat*, a foundation of the Habsburg/republican constitutional order,<sup>23</sup> despised by Hitler as a sign of the old empire’s dissolute racial hygiene, stubbornly resisted being paved over to make way for German “purity.” It turned out that of the vaunted trifecta “Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer!” Austrians could laud the last two but choke on the first. Germans were imperious and, worst of all, anti-Catholic outsiders: derogated as “Piefkes,” they replaced Jews as the scapegoats of choice.<sup>24</sup> The Viennese élite bristled at having been “taken over by provincial thugs” and, more ghastly still, Prussians, Rhinelanders, and other foreigners; Austrians joked snidely that eventually they would kick out the northerners as they had once booted the Turks.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Robert Dassanowsky, *Austrian Cinema: A History* (Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland & Company, 2005), 84.

<sup>22</sup> Mark Mazower, *Hitler’s Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 52.

<sup>23</sup> Edward Timms, “Citizenship and ‘Heimatrecht’ after the Treaty of Saint-Germain,” in *The Habsburg Legacy: National Identity in Historical Perspective*, ed. Ritchie Robertson and Edward Timms (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 158–68.

<sup>24</sup> Beller, *A Concise History of Austria*, 238.

<sup>25</sup> Mazower, *Hitler’s Empire*, 52.

### 6.3 THE INTERWAR AS THE INTER-IMPERIAL: HUNGARY

If the fuzzy diversity of the Austrian-German *Heimat* concept smoothed the path to Anschluss, then Hungary's return to imperial status was propelled above all by the siren song of a homeland defined by rigidly "correct" geographical boundaries. German hegemony arrived first in the form of closer economic ties, which distracted from, though never truly eased, Hungarian disquiet over German ambitions in the Reich's "near abroad."<sup>26</sup> Then, the annexation of Austria proved a pivotal moment for Hungary, as well. Germany was now an immediate neighbor, and concern grew that the incorporation of Hungary's roughly half-million German-speakers, located largely in the western half of the country, might be Hitler's future project.<sup>27</sup> Instead, Hitler extended one irresistible poisoned chalice after another: Upper Hungary in 1938, through the First Vienna Award; northern Transylvania in 1940, through the Second. In exchange for these substantial, if partial, revisions to Trianon, Hungary fell into the *Reich*'s orbit as a member of the Axis in 1940, and as a co-belligerent in the invasions of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in 1941.

While Hungary was the last of the Third Reich's allies to surrender, in most other respects its leaders probably gave more headaches to German foreign policy than meaningful assistance.<sup>28</sup> Within the view of grand strategy the Hungarian soldiers battling at the Don were, on paper, Hitler's auxiliaries. But from their own vantage point they believed themselves to be fighting to preserve Hungary's grip on the recently re-conquered territories – even, or perhaps especially, if this meant gearing up to fight Romanians, their nominal allies, for possession of

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<sup>26</sup> Iván T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1998), 273–277. On the popularity that economic ties to Germany apparently created among the Hungarian populace, see C.A. Macartney, *October Fifteenth: A History of Modern Hungary, 1929-1945*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1957), 142.

<sup>27</sup> Miklós Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision in Hungary, 1920-1945*, trans. Thomas J. DeKornfeld and Helen D. DeKornfeld (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 2007), 256.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 258.

Transylvania.<sup>29</sup> As subordinates in the extended German empire, the Hungarians proved self-interested, reluctant, and untrustworthy. Ultimately, Regent Horthy's attempt to extract his country from the Nazis' doomed conquest of the East resulted in outright military occupation in March 1944. With this, Hungary once again became the appendage of an empire<sup>30</sup> – though its subjugation did not hamper the independent cooperation of its bureaucrats and police in exterminating Jews and Roma until summer of that year.

In the Hungarian case as in the Austrian, regional distinctions exposed imperialist visions of “national” unity for the delusions they were. Here, however, Budapest played the role for Kolozsvár and Kassa that Berlin had played for Vienna: the insensitive, haughty center of empire. For the Hungarian-speakers “liberated” from Czechoslovak or Romanian “captivity,” (re)union with the core state was evidently even more disappointing than it had been for Austrians. “Homecoming” came at the expense of livelihoods. Hungary in 1938-1940 was only in the early stages of rearmament, and the sudden increase in population depressed the labor market<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the Hungarians of the irredentas, not unlike the Austrians, experienced a certain amount of culture shock in being brought into the national fold. Those who had spent the last two decades in Czechoslovakia, the region's truest representative of liberal democracy, had grown accustomed to freer left-wing politics and participation in political life “from the ground up.”<sup>32</sup> In Transylvania, too, returning to the Kingdom of St. Stephen was not all it had been cracked up to be. As early as the 1930s, Transylvanian Hungarians arriving in Budapest concluded instead that their ethnic cohesion was superior to the metropole's. Like Hungarians

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<sup>29</sup> Holly Case, *Between States: The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea during World War II* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 83.

<sup>30</sup> Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, 364–366.

<sup>31</sup> Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision in Hungary*, 283.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

from Czechoslovakia, they found Hungary “repulsive” and undemocratic.<sup>33</sup> Thus in 1940 “the euphoria of ‘returning to the motherland’ was replaced by the routine of everyday existence and the people of this region became acquainted with some of the darker aspects of life in interwar and wartime Hungary: an all-pervasive bureaucracy, a highly hierarchical social order, and a culture of political intolerance.”<sup>34</sup>

## 6.4 THE NATIONALIST PRESENT

If the early days of this project were marked by reminders of the Habsburg imperial legacy, its concluding months have unfolded in the shadow of a Europe, if not a world, grimly adopting more and more of the interwar period’s patterns of inhumanity. For all the optimism that free markets engender free people, and for the two-and-a-half decades of triumphalist faith placed in the European Union’s powers to open borders, the summer and autumn of 2015 will be remembered for razor-wire fences, deportation trains, and other responses to the mass flight of desperate people that disturbingly resemble the methods and arguments of national governments in the 1930s. Indeed, the current Hungarian régime has openly shown particular reverence towards the Horthy era, suggesting an alarmingly elevated level of comfort with authoritarianism, antisemitism, and other repressive features of its distant predecessor.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Gábor Egry, “National Interactions: Hungarians as Minorities and Changes in the Definition of Who Is Hungarian in the 1930s,” in *Influences, Pressures Pro and Con, and Opportunities: Studies on Political Interactions Involving Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Zoltán Ripp and Judit Borus (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2014), 92–95.

<sup>34</sup> Balázs Ablonczy, “Promoting Tourism: Hungarian Nation-Building Policies in Northern Transylvania, 1940–1944,” *Hungarian Studies Review* XXXVI, no. 1–2 (2009): 56.

<sup>35</sup> Bálint Magyar theorizes that this is part of a cynical, utilitarian strategy to garner support from – but not necessarily offer genuine support to – the neo-fascist right, rather than being indicative of any real ideological coherence. Bálint Magyar, *Post-Communist Mafia State: The Case of Hungary*, trans. Bálint Bethlenfalvy et al. (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2016), 236. On this, I will comment only that it is difficult to

This dissertation has tried not only to tease out ways in which a defunct empire continued to affect the movements and mentalities of its former subjects. It has also attempted to challenge, in its own small way, the power that nationalism has long held over our historical imagination. One of the wellsprings of nationalism's strength as an ideology is its fundamental insistence that the "nation" reflects a single collective will, outside of which exist only foreigners, enemies, and traitors (in ascending order of odiousness). One of the things this study has shown, however, is that other wills, collective or individual, do not bend *automatically* to that of the "nation" and its self-appointed enforcers.

We have seen Hungarian travelers refuse to be as "loyal" as patriotism-shaming tourism promoters demand they should – evidence that the bluster of nationalist rhetoric need not be taken as consonant with individual desires. We have diagnosed the robust health of local and provincial identities in Austria, which proved inconstant to both Austrian and Nazi nationalism. The apparently maddening weakness of *honismeret* in Hungary, by contrast, says less about the ignorance of Hungarians than it does about the nationalists' blinkered understanding of what "homeland" really meant to people. Despite the weight of all efforts to the contrary, national identity remained pliant and vulnerable to subordination, even in a period that Eric Hobsbawm judged to be the "apogee of nationalism."<sup>36</sup>

It would be reaching too far to call any of this "resistance," given the enormity of the violence justified in the name of the "nation" after 1938. Yet, at the very least, it should put us in mind of the fact that human agency, not identity in itself, determines human action. Nationalism *alone* cannot adequately explain mass murder, nor even an isolated murder, any more than it can

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understand why Viktor Orbán & Co. would commit so persistently to glorifying the interwar years without having *some* earnest admiration for them.

<sup>36</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 131.

explain why post-imperial Hungarians were “bad” tourists. If we are to keep the 21<sup>st</sup> century from resembling too much the worst parts of the 20<sup>th</sup>, we must embrace our own agency, our own ability to refuse, and not surrender to the false inevitability of nationalists telling us how the world was, is, and must be.

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Fond X.221

## II. PERIODICALS

<i>Alpési Kurír</i>	<i>Kinematograph</i>	<i>Österreichische Reisezeitung</i>
<i>Austria-Hungaria</i>	<i>Külügyi Szemle</i>	
<i>Austrobus</i>	<i>Lillafüredi Fürdőújság</i>	<i>Österreichische Sport- und Reisezeitung</i>
<i>Az utazás</i>	<i>Magyar Alpési Kurír</i>	<i>Österreichische Verkehrs- und Reise Nachrichten</i>
<i>Balatoni Kurír</i>	<i>Magyar Fürdőélet</i>	
<i>Berghoamat</i>	<i>Magyar Országos Tudósító</i>	<i>Österreichs illustrierte Fremdenverkehrs- und Reisezeitung</i>
<i>Budapesti Hírlap</i>	<i>Magyar Szemle</i>	<i>Paimanns Filmlisten</i>
<i>Budapesti Szemle</i>	<i>Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Salzburger Landeskunde</i>	<i>Pesti Napló</i>
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<i>Das neuste Post (Gmunden)</i>	<i>Mitteilungsblatt der Landessachverwalterschaft Wien</i>	<i>Radio-Wien</i>
<i>Das Posthorn</i>		<i>Reichspost</i>
<i>D'Berghoamat</i>	<i>Mozivilág</i>	<i>Semmeringer Nachrichten</i>
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<i>Heimatgaue</i>	<i>Ober-Österreich</i>	<i>Víkend Élet</i>
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*Az új rokon* (1934)

*Grand Hotel* (1932)

*Winternachtstraum* (1935)

*Hochzeitsreise zu Dritt* (1932)

*Ball im Savoy / Bál a Savoyban* (1935)

*...Und es leuchtet die Puszta* (1932)

*Címzett ismeretlen* (1935)

*Vica, a vadevezős* (1933)

*Elnökisasszony* (1935)

*Ende schlecht, Alles gut / Helyet az öregnek* (1934)

*Fräulein Lilli* (1936)

*Rendezvous in Wien* (1934)

*Singende Jugend* (1936)

*Meseautó* (1934)

*Nászút féláron / Hochzeitsreise zu 50%* (1936)

<i>Seine Tochter ist der Peter</i> (1936)	<i>Havasi napsütés</i> (1941)
<i>Die entführte Braut / 3:1 szerelem javára</i> (1937)	<i>Sommerliebe</i> (1942)
<i>Hotel Kikelet</i> (1937)	<i>Egér a palotában</i> (1942)
<i>Édes a bosszú</i> (1937)	<i>Reisebekanntschaft</i> (1943)
<i>Urilány szobát keres</i> (1937)	<i>Ágrólkiszakadt úrilány</i> (1943)
<i>Konzert im Tirol</i> (1938)	<i>Gazdatlan asszony</i> (1944)
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