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**Playing the Part: Hungarian Boy Scouts and the  
Performance of Trauma in Interwar Hungary**

***Abstract:** In 1920, the historic Kingdom of Hungary was dismembered according to the dictates of the Treaty of Trianon. Resulting in the loss of two-thirds of the nation's pre-World War I territory, and one-third of its prewar population, Trianon has long stood as a symbol for Hungarian suffering and trauma in the twentieth century. Historians of modern Hungary have given much consideration to Trianon, with serious attention being paid to what some have called the Trianon syndrome, or the Trianon trauma. Arguing that interwar Hungarian culture and politics need to be understood in light of the menacing psychological shadow cast by Trianon, a number of historians have suggested that the people of Hungary were traumatized spontaneously and universally by the dismemberment of the nation and the suffering that followed. This paper argues that, though this may indeed have been the case on a raw emotional level, careful consideration needs to be given to the overlapping political and pedagogical functions of the Trianon trauma, especially as this trauma found expression in repeated public "performances" of the Trianon tragedy. Focusing on the revisionist performances of Hungarian boy scouts between the wars, and in particular on the personal papers of the Hungarian geographer and boy scout leader Ferenc Fodor, this paper draws a direct link between trauma and performance in the interwar period, and argues that, though trauma was indeed central to Hungarian cultural politics, it functioned as much as a pedagogical strategy as it did a psychological reality.*

Early in the summer of 1924, one hundred and sixteen boy scouts throughout Hungary were handed a 14-page manual by their troop leaders. Chosen to represent their nation in the upcoming World Jamboree being held in Copenhagen in August of the same year, these young men, like their boy scout colleagues from nations across Europe and the rest of the world, were asked to spend the rest of the summer preparing for the numerous competitions in which they would participate. Informing the boys that they would be judged in categories that ranged from troop discipline and scouting spirit to orienteering, canoeing, and folk dance, the preparatory booklet made it clear that each participant in the Jamboree was expected "to adhere conscientiously to the daily obligations" [tartsa be lelkiismeretesen az előírt cserkész napikötelességeket] laid out by their leaders, and "to endeavor" through their training "to become an even better scout, both physically and spiritually [iparkodják testileg és lelkileg is minél különb cserkészzé lenni] ("Prospektus" 1924, 13). Not surprisingly, such efforts to improve the self were primarily a means to a greater, ultimately nationalistic end. As the booklet proclaimed: "It is not the prominence of the individual that is important, but rather the general, solid formation of the group" [Nem az egyes egyének kimagaslása a fontos, hanem az egész csapat átlagos, szolid kiképzése] (8). "Hungarian boy scout!" the booklet declared, "[y]ou are representing thousands and thousands of your boy scout colleagues, and your entire

nation as well—represent them worthily” [Magyar cserkész! Ezer és ezer cserkész társadat és egész hazádat képviseled,— hát képviseld méltón!] (13)!

As these pronouncements make clear, the boy scout leadership regarded the World Jamboree in Copenhagen as an international stage upon which Hungarian boy scouts would play out carefully rehearsed roles. Representing their nation in an international forum, the young men that had been chosen to travel to Denmark in the summer of 1924 were expected to follow the script of a very particular performance, one which had been carefully laid out in the booklet, and which was to be rehearsed carefully in the months leading up to the event itself. Coached throughout the summer by their troop leaders and by their parents, the boys traveling to Denmark were being asked to perform well not just as scouts, but also as Hungarians.

The fact that scout leaders were asking the young men to act as cultural and effectively also as political ambassadors for their nation is by no means surprising. Such nationalist performances have been at the heart of the scouting movement throughout the world from its inception at the beginning of the twentieth century, and have remained a focal point of scout meetings and international jamborees up to the present day. However, what perhaps *is* surprising about the Hungarian case in 1924 was the emphasis that was placed on what might be accurately called the “emotional tone” of this nationalist performance. No doubt influenced above all else by the devastating Treaty of Trianon which had been signed only four years earlier, the heroic, resolute vision of Hungary and Hungarianness (*magyarság*) that the boy scouts were expected to embody and express was to be tempered by a sober, self-reflective stock-taking of the nation’s past, and especially its recent past. As the booklet stressed: “We want our performance to be in keeping with Hungary’s past and present (we cannot live as well and cheerfully as other nations)” [Szereplésünket összhangba akarjuk hozni Magyarországnak múltjával és jelenével (nem élhetünk olyan jól és vígan, mint más nemzetek)] (8) The performance of Hungarian history and identity, in other words, was not all “fun and games.” In the end, the performance of Hungarianness was to be conditioned, and thus also defined, by a simultaneous performance of national trauma.

At the risk of reading too much into this admittedly brief, and to some extent even ambiguous statement, I would like to suggest that the admonition to Hungarian boy scouts to comport themselves in a subdued and melancholy way opens up at least two important—albeit at this point only tentative—questions about the nature, meaning and instrumentalization of post-Trianon trauma in the interwar period. The first question revolves around the internalization of collective and individual trauma in the wake of Trianon. As a diverse group of scholars such as Steven Béla Várdy (1983), Nándor Dreisziger (1988), Paul Lendvai (2003), Kristian Gerner (2007) and others have shown, trauma was undoubtedly both a historical and psychological reality in interwar Hungary. But was it inevitable that the Trianon trauma should be as spontaneously felt and immediately understood as these studies would lead us to believe? Put another way, was the “shock” of Trianon on its own enough to produce a pervasive national “syndrome” (Várdy, 27) or “neurosis” (Dreisziger, 574) in the interwar period, or was the existence and meaning of interwar trauma instead shaped, at least in part, by the actions and agendas of Hungarian politicians and pedagogues? As the above passage from the boy scout manual begins to suggest, and as further analysis of revisionist literature and the personal papers of the boy scout leader Ferenc Fodor will demonstrate, Hungarian

educators and nation builders put much thought and energy into the way in which trauma was publicly defined, represented, and mobilized in post-Trianon Hungary. I am by no means suggesting here that Hungarians were not affected emotionally or psychologically by Trianon. Indeed many, if not all, no doubt were. What I am suggesting is that, no matter how sincere Hungarians may have been in their public expressions of trauma, the actual internalization and understanding of this trauma was dependent on a certain degree of “coaching,” at least as far as Hungary’s youth were concerned.

The second question that the language of the boy scout manual opens up revolves around the central role of trauma in the social and political representations of Trianon between the wars. The call for boy scouts to make an overt, uniform display of national misery and suffering while in Denmark leads us to ask about the extent to which trauma itself may have been highlighted or “performed” in nationalist discourse and spectacle in the wake of the Trianon tragedy. As I will discuss in more detail below, the boy scouts were by no means the only Hungarian youths called upon to make demonstrative and often repeated displays of national suffering, misery, and dismemberment in the interwar period. This fact alone suggests a need for the serious consideration and analysis of the relationship between trauma and performance within in the context of both nationalist and revisionist politics and pedagogy. Of course, historians have long recognized the central role that the Treaty of Trianon played in Hungarian politics and political theater after 1920. Ignác Romsics, for example, claims that it “determined everything” politically in the interwar period (116), while Miklós Zeidler has argued that the mythical elements invoked in anti-Trianon rhetoric and spectacle were often “aimed at national self-therapy and mobilization” (72). What is typically missing from these important analyses, however, is a serious consideration of the way in which national trauma itself functioned as a very deliberate aspect of these performances. By building on the notion of the Trianon trauma outlined above, and by drawing on a growing body of scholarly work that links identity formation to repeated performances of both individual and collective trauma, this paper suggests that the Trianon trauma was not only central to the staging of Hungarian politics in the interwar period, but also that it had an important role to play in a complex, intergenerational process aimed at the moral, national and ultimately psycho-ontological education of Hungary’s youth. If we want to retain the notions of performance and trauma as useful analytical categories for the study of interwar Hungarian cultural politics (and in the interest of deepening our understanding of nationalist identity formation, I think it is), then we need to bring these two processes together in an integrated if at this point only speculative and incomplete way.

What follows below is an attempt to lay out a tentative framework for a more comprehensive study of the relationship between trauma and performance in interwar Hungary. Such a study needs in the first place to recognize that national trauma was performed on two principal stages: one international, and the other domestic. It also needs to recognize that these performances of national trauma functioned simultaneously on two parallel yet intimately connected levels. On the more immediate and obvious level, the performance of trauma was part of a broader political strategy tied up primarily with calls for the revision of Trianon. However, on a deeper and admittedly less obvious level, these performances of national trauma also helped to lay the psychological foundations for the construction and reaffirmation of Hungarian identity and the nationalist “self”. More will be said below about the important transformative aspects of

the Trianon trauma, but for now it is important to keep in mind that, in their performance of national trauma, Hungarian youths like the boy scouts were not only communicating or repeating a particular political message to a broader audience, but they were also simultaneously engaged in a pedagogical project, one which was intended to give shape to the character and outlook of an entire generation.

To begin this study, I would suggest that the preparatory manual distributed to selected Hungarian boy scouts in the summer of 1924 provides some important first clues into the more obvious political aspects of anti-Trianon performances, at least as they were played out in front of a non-Hungarian audience. At the heart of the nationalist spectacle created by the boy scouts at the jamboree in 1924 was a vision of Hungary as a proud and fundamentally “European” nation. Though the vision of Hungary enacted by the boy scouts acknowledged, and even romanticized, Hungary’s supposed connections to the Turanian world, this nod to the nation’s eastern origins was overlaid very consciously with the vision of Hungary as a Christian nation that had played a key civilizational role throughout its history. Underlining the assertion that Hungary had long stood as the easternmost defender of Western civilization, the manual stated that, above all else, “we want to represent a thousand years of Hungarian strength and toughness to Western culture” [Ezeréves magyar erővel, magyar keménységgel akarjuk képviselni a nyugati kulturát] (“Prospektus” 1924, 8).

Of course, as noted above, the boy scouts had to temper the performance of national fortitude with a “traumatized” emotional disposition, one that not only drew attention to Hungary’s dismembered state, but also appears to have been designed to gain international sympathy for the revision of the nationally devastating treaty. It is impossible to discern from the primary sources I have gathered so far just how successful the boy scout performance may have been. However, it is worth noting that Hungarian boy scouts reprised their performance on other occasions as well, most notably in August 1929, when a contingent of 800 boy scouts traveled with Count Pál Teleki to a jamboree in London, England as the personal guests of Lord Rothermere (Rothermere 1939, 59).<sup>1</sup> Himself a tireless supporter of Hungarian revisionism, Lord Rothermere had been moved to write his first pro-revisionist article for his paper *The Daily Mail* after a brief visit to Hungary in 1927. As he would later recount in 1939: “I was appalled to find here, in the very heart of Europe, a nation of splendid history and of high culture which was being bled to death by the operation of a Peace Treaty.”(18) “A contagion of despair,” he wrote, had spread throughout the country (16), giving rise not only to “suicidal tendencies” on the part of individual Hungarians, but also to a “flood of pent-up patriotic feeling” which was itself a product of “a great force of national emotion [that] had for seven years been accumulating under increasing pressure” (6). This perception of widespread national suffering and pain fed Rothermere’s longstanding “sympathy for Hungary,” and further fueled his “overwhelming desire to see her injustices redressed and her tortured people made free again from their agony” (77).

Whether or not there was a conscious political effort to mobilize Hungarian boy scouts as a means of garnering international sympathy and support for the revisionist cause is, at this point in my research, still an open question. But, at least as far as the

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<sup>1</sup> The pagination indicated here for Rothermere’s monograph comes from the on-line version of this book. See <[www.hungarianhistory.com/lib/rothermere/rothermere.doc](http://www.hungarianhistory.com/lib/rothermere/rothermere.doc)>.

jamboree in England was concerned, the boy scouts clearly had an important public relations role to play, taking center stage not only at the official banquet hosted by Rothermere in Hungary's honor on August 19<sup>th</sup>, but also at the symbolically important St. István's Day mass that he celebrated with the Hungarian delegation the very next day ("Souvenir Programme" 1929). Evidence, moreover, of performances by other young Hungarians during the interwar period suggest that the boy scouts were by no means alone in their "international" presentations of national trauma and mourning in the wake of Trianon. A good example of this was a performance enacted for Rothermere's son, Esmond Harmsworth, when he visited Hungary in 1938. It is worth reproducing Rothermere's description of the spectacle witnessed by his son. Rothermere wrote:

There were displays by national associations of all kinds, at which young girls, after dancing that curious Hungarian peasant polka, the Csárdás...formed themselves up in the shape of the original frontiers of Hungary. Then other girls, dressed in black, and carrying black flags, cut into this human outline of Magyar territory, and marked the post-war frontiers of Hungary, while the girls left outside the line of mourning-banners prostrated themselves on the ground, and a choir sang that vibrant passionate anthem which since the war had become almost the national air of Hungary *Nem! Nem! Soha!*,—declaring that *No! No! Never!* would Hungary agree to the reduced frontiers imposed upon her. (Rothermere 1939, 44)

This performance of the Hungarian geo-body being dismembered, coupled with the representations of both collective national mourning and the resolute defiance of a proud people, had much in common with Hungarian boy scout performances on the international stage. By physically embodying and playing out the Trianon trauma, these young girls, like the boy scouts, sought not only to inform their audience of Hungary's postwar plight, but also to move them emotionally, and thus gain support for their nation's revisionist cause.

Similarities between these sorts of performances by Hungarian youths, on the one hand, and the revisionist narratives that appeared in countless interwar pamphlets and albums, on the other, suggest that there was an important link between the nationalist discourse surrounding Trianon and the concomitant performance of Hungarian trauma. By helping to shape the narrative structure of the arguments being made for the revision of the Trianon Treaty, revisionist literature no doubt served as veritable scripts for Hungarian youths and their leaders. The widely circulated and well-known revisionist album *Justice for Hungary!* provides a good example of this. Published originally in September 1930 in Hungarian and other European languages by the Légrády brothers (who were the editors and publishers of the "Pesti Hírlap," one of Hungary's leading daily newspapers), this extensive revisionist work, one which went through multiple editions, reproduced and elaborated upon arguments that had been made since the signing of the Treaty of Trianon in 1920.

Judging from the presentation of the arguments made by the Légrády brothers in their revisionist publication, the strategy behind casting Hungarians as a profoundly traumatized people appears to have been twofold. On the one hand, the rendering of Hungarians as having been wronged by an unjust treaty was clearly aimed at generating

sympathy and rallying international support for the Hungarian cause. The English-language version of the album, for example, makes an emotional appeal to American readers in the first few pages by pointing to Hungary's suffering, and by pleading with Americans to imagine both the anguish and the anger they would feel if their nation had been dismembered in a similar way (Légrády 1931, 3). The second strategy, however, was much more ominous. Presenting Hungary as an aggrieved nation "clenching its teeth" in rage (4-5), the album refers to the "embittered" Hungarians as veritable "gunpowder lying ready to explode" (10). Reassuring readers that Hungarians were normally peaceful and patient by nature, the authors nevertheless appear to have drawn on what has become a standard understanding of trauma as a "an obsession that provokes agony in a great number of people and [which] may impede rational decision making and action" (Gerner 2007, 82), issuing a warning that the people of Hungary might themselves be too traumatized and emotional to remain rational, disciplined, and passive.

From a polemical point of view, this representation of a traumatized nation on the brink of anarchy and violence had some real teeth. Hungary had exploded into revolution and violence in the immediate aftermath of WWI, and revisionists like the Légrády brothers were quick to link this "tragic descent" into Bolshevism and political terror in 1919 to the trauma suffered by Hungarians in the wake of their defeat in war and their subsequent occupation by Allied forces. WWI, these revisionists claimed, had left Hungary "enfeebled and reduced to indigence" (Légrády 1931, 7). More tellingly, the situation at the end of WWI "made the nation completely lose its mental equilibrium." This, coupled with an equally "devastating loss of faith," is why the country "fell easy prey to Bolshevism" (26). The Légrády brothers were not the only ones to fall back on this assessment of the immediate postwar period in an attempt to mobilize international support for the revision of the Treaty of Trianon. Rothermere, for instance, came to a similar conclusion in the late 1920s. Fearing another "outbreak of Bolshevism" in the country, he argued that "so much suffering, so much despair, so deep and rankling a sense of oppression constitute[s] a mass of bitterness in the center of Europe which, if allowed to continue, [will] inevitably find expression in violent action" (18).

That at least some Hungarian political and cultural leaders made extensive use of the so-called Trianon trauma on the international stage during the interwar period is, I think, clear from the evidence presented above. However, as noted in the introduction, the international stage was but one of two stages upon which the Trianon trauma was played out. The other stage was the domestic one, and was no doubt more familiar, and more central, to the education and attempted politicization of Hungarian youth. As Kristian Gerner argues in his recent article "Open Wounds? Trianon, the Holocaust and the Hungarian Trauma," Trianon was a "central and focal element in everyday life in rump-Hungary." Echoing the observations of historians and contemporary observers alike, and pointing to the underlying political utility of Trianon-centered spectacles, Gerner suggests that "with the whole country as an arena, the Trianon treaty was staged as the handing over of a death sentence and execution in the same act" (86). The re-enactment and reiteration of the Trianon tragedy, he added, was more or less a political necessity in the interwar period. "Practically nobody with any impact on the organization of public space in Hungary," he observes, could have afforded to acquiesce publicly to "the verdict of Trianon" (86).

An assessment like Gerner's resonates with Paul Hanebrink's observation that many Hungarians, "in governing circles and beyond," placed truncated Hungary "at the center of a national cult of martyrdom in which Hungary was a crucified Christ whose resurrection would come with the revision of the unjust borders" (111). Highlighting the obvious religious dimensions of interwar revisionist discourse and imagery, Hanebrink also briefly discusses the role that Trianon played as a pedagogical tool in the 1920s and 1930s. The ministry of education, for example, issued special prayer books to schools in the wake of Trianon, asking students and teachers alike to pray publicly "for an end to the nation's agony and [for] the resurrection of an integral and complete Hungary" (111-12). Noting that classes both began and ended with the saying of a Magyar Credo which proclaimed belief in God, justice and the resurrection of Hungary, Hanebrink concludes: "Through countless recitations all over the country, the credo, along with the many images of the crucified nation that accompanied it, firmly established in public discourse the vision of a Hungary redeemed amidst national death" (112).

Though Hanebrink focuses more on the idea of national redemption than he does on the idea of trauma, his observation that the pedagogical potential of Trianon was unleashed only through "countless recitations" is key to understanding the role that repeated iterations of the Trianon trauma played both in the internalization of political messages, and in the attempted construction of individual and collective identities. As Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofosky Sedgwick argue in the introduction to their co-edited study *Performativity and Performance*, the complicated process of identity formation relies heavily on the repetition of carefully defined discourses and performances. Drawing heavily on the ideas of J. L. Austin, Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler, Parker and Sedgwick argue that this repetition of more or less conventional speech acts, coupled with the theatricality of everyday social, cultural, and political rituals, help to construct identities through repeated, and inherently complex, "citational processes" (1-4).

When understood in this theoretical light, the repeated performances of the Trianon trauma were undoubtedly of central importance to the cultural politics of the interwar period, but not just for the reasons outlined by Hanebrink. Though it was politically expedient to have Hungarian youth internalize promises of national resurrection, it was also important to Hungary's conservative, Christian nationalist elite that these same youths be able to understand and identify the material and spiritual conditions that had led to the nation's downfall in the first place. The Trianon trauma, in fact, was not merely posed as a problem that Hungarian youth needed to solve or overcome. It was, rather, a condition to be internalized for a variety of pedagogical reasons. In order to reinforce the value of the message they were teaching, and to highlight the nature of the solutions that they offered, Hungarian educators and politicians needed to keep the "reality" of a deeply rooted national trauma, or set of traumas, ever present in the consciousness of the nation's youth.

The preparatory manual issued to boy scouts in the summer of 1924 provides some useful insight into the pedagogical intentions behind repeated performances of national trauma. As we have already seen, the scouts were told by their leaders that, given the realities of Hungarian history, they could not live as well nor as happily as people from other countries. In part this admonition was intended to help condition the boys for the revisionist performance that they were about to give on the international stage. However, I would argue that there was a second, perhaps less obvious strategy at

work here, one which aimed at shaping the psycho-ontological disposition of an entire post-Trianon generation of Hungarian youth. By underscoring the precariousness of the nation's existence, and by further reminding these boys of the need to overcome their own weaknesses and shortcomings in a world determined by the harsh principles defined and described by the likes of Darwin, Machiavelli, and Hobbes, boy scout leaders in essence "traumatized" their young charges as a means of laying the groundwork for the boys' social, political and moral development. Instructing the scouts to spend time every evening reflecting on whether or not they had performed their duties to the best of their abilities, and reminding them on a daily basis of the unforgiving, aggressive nature of the modern world and international relations, the manual concluded: "Let no day pass in which you didn't do something to defend you place in the global competition" (Egy nap se múljk el, hogy valamit ne tettél volna, hogy a világvrsenyen megálld a helyedet) ("Prospektus" 1924, 13).

As Cathy Caruth explains in her article "Traumatic Awakenings," the repetition, replaying, or remembering of a traumatic event not only helps individuals to frame the perceived reality of "empirical events," but also gives shape to an urgent sense of "responsibility" towards the self and others (98). Drawing on the work of Jacques Lacan, Caruth explains that repeated performances or reiterations of a particular trauma ultimately function to create "an ethical relation to the real" (98). This important theoretical insight, one that could be further strengthened by incorporating Svetlana Boym's (2001) conceptualization of "reflective nostalgia" as a pedagogical tool, has real analytical potential, at least as far as the study of the political and cultural processes behind post-Trianon identity formation is concerned. More work admittedly needs to be done to fully integrate the sort of theoretical approaches suggested above. However, it is obvious from my research so far that such an enriched analytical framework would help us to better understand how repeated performances of the Trianon trauma helped to lay the psycho-ontological groundwork for the formation of an ethical disposition towards both the Hungarian nation and, as I argue in more detail elsewhere, the modern self (Jobbitt 2008).

Beyond working to better incorporate the theoretical insights of scholars like Caruth and Boym, the inclusion of studies on the "intergenerational" dimensions of trauma would also help us achieve a more thorough and historically informed understanding of the relationship between trauma, performance, and identity formation. Once again, Hanebrink's work on Christian nationalist politics in Hungary between 1890 and 1944 points us in the right direction on this analytical front. Reminding us that the Hungarian past had already been "marked with shattering defeats" prior to Trianon, and that poets had been responding very consciously to "national catastrophe" since at least the sixteenth century, Hanebrink argues that the interconnected nationalist themes of "bleak despair in the face of annihilation" and "fervent hope for self-liberation and the nation's rebirth" were by no means new to Hungarian intellectuals and cultural-political leaders in the post-WWI period (67-68). Drawing on Judit Frigyesi's study of Béla Bartók and fin-de-siècle Budapest, Hanebrink concludes that an entire generation of Hungarian nationalist leaders who had come of age in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had been reared on an integrated discourse of "apocalypse and the hope for regeneration" (69). "Invoked either as heroic persistence in the face of 'cosmic loneliness' and the 'death of civilization', or as historical memory of renewal from

defeat,” he writes, “the language of death and rebirth...was a prominent feature in the Hungarian literary canon, familiar (and deeply felt) for all educated readers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (67-68; Frigyesi 1998, 66-67).

Hanebrink’s observation that the internalization of Hungarian suffering at the turn of the century was to some degree “learned” is consistent with existing theories on the nature of trauma as a transgenerational, or intergenerational, phenomenon. As the feminist theorist and psychiatric practitioner Bonnie Burstow argues, tying trauma to a particular event or set of events *per se* is inadequate (Burstow 2003; see also Danieli 1998). In order to understand the nature and function of trauma, she argues, we have to first understand and appreciate the complicated context within which a discrete traumatic event (like Trianon) occurs. In conjunction with other factors, education and memory both play an important role in the construction of the collective cultural traumas against which groups and individuals negotiate and ultimately perform their identities. An event like Trianon, therefore, does not in itself necessarily “traumatize” the people, but rather provides an opportunity for the re-articulation, and thus also the potential mobilization and instrumentalization, of existing traumas and anxieties.

In order to better understand the transgenerational dimensions of interwar Hungarian trauma and its performance it is worth looking closely at the personal reflections of the Hungarian geographer, teacher, and boy scout leader Ferenc Fodor (1887-1962). As a conservative, Christian nationalist scholar and pedagogue, the layers of Fodor’s own pre-Trianon trauma ran deep. Though it is virtually impossible to explore these layers in isolation from each other, and beyond this to determine which ones might have taken primacy, it is perhaps worthwhile to begin with a discussion of the way in which Fodor’s formal schooling at the beginning of the twentieth century may have provided him with an introduction not just to the host of disintegrative forces which threatened to undermine the nation, but also to the more abstract forms of existential anxiety that he would harbor throughout his life. Schooled between 1899 and 1906 in a Catholic gymnasium in Szatmárnémeti, and thus educated in his teenage years by Christian nationalist men who themselves served as a collective, transgenerational link between Hungarian traumas past and present, Fodor was immersed at an early age in nation-building discourses and performances which were as psychologically traumatizing on one level as they may have been psychologically empowering or reassuring on another.

A collection of twenty-five short essays written by Fodor as a gymnasium student at the turn of the century, for example, suggest that, even as a young student, he had already begun to cultivate a keen awareness of Hungary’s precarious position as a middling power in what had become an increasingly aggressive European struggle for territory and resources. Commenting on work by the seventeenth-century essayist Count Miklós Zrínyi, Fodor reflected on the idea that present-day Hungary must be prepared to stand alone against its enemies, both actual and potential. Echoing Zrínyi’s observation in 1660 that Hungary could not count on any of Europe’s major or minor powers for enduring military support or effective diplomatic aid, Fodor likewise argued that it would be unrealistic, and indeed undesirable, for Hungarians in the present to rely “on the help of a foreign nation”. Like Zrínyi before him, Fodor concluded that “we just need to improve ourselves” [nincs szüksége a magyarnak idegen nép segítségére, csak javítsa még magát]. If Hungarians focused on self-improvement and self-reliance, he concluded,

they would never be oppressed. (Fodor 1905-1906, 11). This notion that Hungary effectively stood alone in the international arena, and that the nation needed to cultivate a disciplined core of morally-pure men who would be ready at a moment's notice to rush to its defense, was reinforced by his reading of poets like Sándor Kisfaludy (1772-1844) and Ferenc Kölcsey (1790-1838), both of whom conveyed dire warnings of future national catastrophes by revisiting, and thus replaying, disastrous military and diplomatic events in Hungary's past.

Fodor's literary observations suggest that he had internalized, if perhaps only by default, the arguably bleak, "Hobbesian" principles of international relations; principles which had become unapologetically aggressive in an age when the interconnected fates of all European nations were largely determined by the state-building calculus of *Realpolitik*. If Fodor was indeed traumatized or made anxious by this Hobbesian realization, as I think he was, then it is worth noting that he was certainly not alone. As feminist scholars like J. Ann Tickner (1992) and Cynthia Weber (1999) have made clear in their critical work on international relations in both the global and American contexts, trauma and existential anxiety are central to "realist" perceptions of the world and the nation's place in it. Tickner, for example, argues in her engaging critique of the "realist" underpinnings of modern international relations that a fundamentally harsh, and inherently "masculine," view of the world legitimates the structural violence that holds the international state system together. Beyond this, she contends, it also justifies the social, political, cultural, and moral instrumentalization of an entire citizenry as it is mobilized on a quotidian level by nation-states engaged in what amounts to a perpetual state of war. Weber, in turn, contends in her more narrow, and in many ways more scathing, critique of twentieth-century American foreign policy, that the aggressive, zero-sum nature of modern international relations can have a detrimental psychological impact on the national psyche. Deconstructing the attempts of successive presidential administrations to mask the tenuous and often ineffective character of American power in the Caribbean, Weber concludes that U.S. diplomacy and military policy in the region must be read in light of traumatized, and by extension traumatizing, imperialist practices and discourses, ones which she claims have been central to American nationalism and state building since at least the late nineteenth century.

The notions put forth by both Tickner and Weber of entire nations traumatized by an awareness of the state's precarious position in an otherwise aggressive and uncertain world is, I think, reflected in Fodor's personal papers. Listing the important events of his life, for instance, Fodor was careful to record the different international conflicts and wars that had made an impact on him, and indeed on the rest of the nation, during his youth. Fodor made note, for example, of the outbreak of the Greco-Turkish War in 1897, the Spanish-American War in 1898, the Boer War in 1899, and the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 (Fodor 1959, 1-2). Reflecting, moreover, on the outbreak of the First Balkan War on October 8, 1912, Fodor mentioned the unsettling impact that this nearby conflict had had on the collective Hungarian psyche, writing that "the public feeling grew quite anxious" [a közhangulat nyugtalanodik] (10). The palpable sense of anxiety that international conflicts like these generated was underlined, and no doubt also exploited, by educators and politicians devoted to creating a new generation of Hungarians willing and able to take up the struggle against the nation's adversaries. As Fodor and his classmates were reminded in 1905 during a school assembly commemorating the

ultimately failed war of Independence in 1848-1849, it was their patriotic duty to stand ever-on-guard for themselves, and thus also for the nation.

Onto this nationalist imperative, one which reminded boys like Fodor of their patriotic duty to stand ready to fight for the nation against a foreign enemy, was mapped a similar reminder that they needed to be prepared to fight against the forces of internal dissolution as well. In the same way that they were called upon to be vigilant in the face of external foes, they were also inundated with anxious visions of a nation imperiled by the morally- and spiritually-void principles of liberalism, materialism, and secularism. Such a vision was articulated by the political and literary figures that Fodor was exposed to as a gymnasium student. His reading of poets like János Arany (1817-1882), for example, introduced Fodor to a Hungarian manifestation of a much broader stream of nineteenth-century European thought, one which reflected upon the perceived fragmentation of traditional communities, and which highlighted the increasing loneliness and alienation of the modern individual. In reading and commenting at length on Arany's epic poem "Toldi," for example, Fodor came face to face with the idea that the principal task of the modern Hungarian man was to struggle against the immoral forces of material determinism, and beyond this also to overcome one's alienation "from all that is human" (Klaniczay 1982, 236; see also Fodor 1905-1906, n.p.).

Fodor's childhood introduction to the nation's tragic past and tenuous present had an important impact on his political, intellectual, and ultimately psychological development. On the one hand, it cultivated within him a heightened awareness of the inherent fragility of both nation and self, pointing in particular to the multiple disintegrative forces (both internal and external) that conspired against the construction and maintenance of unity and totality on a number of different levels. On the other, it instilled within him a sense of duty, one which was inherently defensive in nature, and which often bordered on missionary zeal. Even as a gymnasium student, Fodor was reminded repeatedly of his role as a loyal and faithful member of a core group of Christian-nationalist men whose responsibility it was to defend the nation against the numerous disintegrative forces working against it. As he would write much later in his life, it was from behind the gates of Szatmár's Christian schools, churches, and other religious institutions that Hungarians like himself fought to hold back "the rootless and unpatriotic spirit of the liberal period" [a liberalis korszak gyökértelen és mindinkább nemzetietlen szelleme] (Fodor 1952, 169).

Fodor's inherently defensive stance, one that was informed as much by his traumatized sense of Hungary's past as it was shaped by his redemptive hope for the nation's future, provided the basis for his nationalist scholarship in the interwar period, and also for his pedagogical work as a teacher and boy scout leader. It is worth noting that this pedagogical work, and especially his boy scout work, was fueled as much by his calling as a teacher and nation-builder as it was by his need to find a meaningful way to address his own traumatized sense of self. Reflecting on his conversion to the boy scout movement in 1915, Fodor noted that he had first turned to the boy scouts out of desperation, in particular over the declining ideals and spiritual weakness that he perceived in his male students. Noting that "something needed to happen, something needed to be produced so that, for the good of the nation's youth, we could eradicate the feeling of want that lingered in their souls" [kellett valaminek történnie, valaminek megteremnie, hogy betölthessük az ifjúság javának lelkében zsibbasztó hiányérzeteket],

Fodor recounts how he eagerly enlisted in the scouting movement, and began working to help build a meaningful movement in Hungary. Scouting, he argued, provided him with an effective “educational tool” [nevelő eszköz] that he could use to “reach out to the spirit of the youth” [amellyel hozzáférhetnék az ifjúság lelkéhez] (Mári 1943, 24).

Though Fodor ostensibly joined the scouting movement in order to nurture future generations of morally-oriented Christian nationalist men, what he soon discovered was that he, too, was in need of nurturing. What is particularly remarkable in light of this present study is that his own involvement as a boy scout leader (and thus also as an intergenerational disseminator of traumatizing nationalist discourse) simultaneously heightened his own feelings of inadequacy, and his own sense of national and personal anxiety. “At first I thought it would be my job merely to train and nurture the youth,” he confessed, “but I soon came to realize that, more than anything else, I had to re-train myself” [Azt hittem, hogy az ifjúságot nevelem, de csakhamar arra jutottam, hogy elsősorban önmagammat kell újra nevelnem] (24). Recognizing his own physical and spiritual poverty reflected back to him in the work he was doing, Fodor noted that he was forced to reevaluate and thus also renew on an on-going basis his “relationships with God, the world, the Hungarian nation, society, and its youth—indeed with everything of human value” [Azt kellett értékelnem az Istenhez, a világhoz, a magyarsághoz, a társadalomhoz, az ifjúsághoz, minden emberi értékhez való összes kapcsolatomat]. Concerned that he perhaps lacked the necessary strength and moral fortitude to help both the nation and himself, Fodor admitted that he needed additional guidance to help him navigate “the tangle of everyday matters” [az élet mindennapi kérdéseinek szövevényeiben] (25). The boy scouts, he contended, provided him with the necessary tools to reconstruct an entire “inner world” [belső világom] for himself (24).

Fodor was by no means the only one who turned to the boy scouts out of a desire to find meaningful spaces and tools for the negotiation of both nation and self. Many of Hungary’s interwar scouting leaders, men who had joined the movement before Trianon, and who, like Teleki, Fodor and others, would go on to assume leading positions amongst the nation’s social, political, professional, and academic elite, were drawn to scouting because it offered sanctuary and brotherhood while simultaneously serving as a tool for nurturing a new generation of Hungarian men (see Mári 1943). The big challenge they faced, however, was the devising of effective strategies for the mobilization and moral “training” of this new, interwar generation. How could they turn the youth of the nation towards scouting as an inherently moral, nation-building project in the same way that they had? How, above all else, could they produce in this new generation an agitated but reflective disposition towards the world, one which would help the boys to internalize and also instrumentalize the ever-vigilant defensive stance needed to protect both themselves and the nation from a host of disintegrative forces?

Not surprisingly, Trianon—as tragic and devastating as it was demographically, territorially, and economically—provided a perfect, if unfortunate, opportunity to revisit, renew, and reaffirm the same types of nationalist discourses and performances that had simultaneously traumatized and inspired Fodor’s generation. Ironically, though it was very effective from a mobilizational point of view, the repeated performances of the Trianon trauma often failed to have the intended pedagogical, or moral, effect. Hanebrink, for example, notes that the explosion of “public rituals” in the post-Trianon period actually threatened to undermine rather than reinforce Christianity, and by

extension, Christian-nationalism as a moral, nation-building force in interwar Hungary. Repeated performances of Hungary as a martyred nation, it was feared, had reduced Christianity itself “to a meaningless symbol.” Though it was “all very well to speak of a state unified by Christian values,” Christian leaders argued that “those values only had real transformative power in society if they came from religion as it was actually practiced...[S]horn from this confessional context, Christianity amounted mainly to vague hope for a better future” (112).

Hungary’s boy scout leadership expressed similar frustrations over their growing inability to control the intended pedagogical and moral messages behind the Trianon trauma, especially by the beginning of the 1930s. Though there were undoubtedly many Hungarian youths who were sincere in their performances of the Trianon trauma, and who “properly” internalized the moral, political, and spiritual lessons being taught, there was great concern that a large majority of the so-called “Trianon generation” were using Trianon as an excuse to shirk, rather than embrace, their nation-building duties. One of the main intentions behind replaying and performing the Trianon trauma, we will remember, was to create a “proper” ethical disposition towards both nation and self. This, however, did not always happen. As Fodor himself complained in 1931, “the concealed fatalism that lies behind many Trianon slogans plays a dishonest game with our nation’s future” [a trianoni frázis mögé elbujtatott fatalizmus becstelen játék a nemzet jövőjével] (Fodor 1931, 17). Writing in the boy scout periodical *Fiatal Magyarok* [Young Hungarian], Fodor (who was also the editor of this monthly publication) wrote that Hungary’s youth had been easily deceived by those who would use Trianon to manipulate people into believing that the responsibility for Hungary’s problems lay not with themselves, but with the treaty. According to Fodor, Hungarian youths, like so many other Hungarians, used the postwar dismemberment of Hungary to deflect moral, political, and economic responsibility away from themselves. “One might almost say,” he argued, “that Trianon came as a blessing to an idle people who were all too ready to pull the mourning veil across every sin that had been committed since Trianon” [majdnem azt mondhatnók, hogy szinte jól jött Trianon annak az eltunyult nemzedéknek, amely ezzel a gyászleppellel kényelmesen takargatja mindazt a bűnt, amit Trianon óta elkövetett]. Insisting that Hungarians had sunk into a convenient lethargy in the wake of WWI, Fodor suggested that serious attention needed to be paid to the internal reasons for the nation’s post-Trianon misery, and for the country’s cultural, intellectual, and economic backwardness (17).

The perceived pitfalls and failures surrounding the performance of trauma in interwar Hungary no doubt open up more questions than I can answer here, but I think it is clear from what we have examined up to this point that, though Trianon may have been “experienced” by all Hungarians in one way or another, it was by no means universally internalized, or uniformly understood, at least not by Hungarian youth. Moreover, the repeated effort that educators and youth leaders like Fodor had to exert in order to ensure that Hungarian youth not only remembered Trianon “properly,” but also responded morally and emotionally to Hungarian suffering in an equally suitable way, further suggests that Trianon did not necessarily create a spontaneous “shock” in Hungary, nor did it produce a universal trauma that gave rise organically and immediately to interwar revisionist politics and spectacle. Trianon may indeed have lingered ominously in interwar Hungary “like a malignant disease” (Várdy 1983, 27), but this sickness or

syndrome (if indeed we can call it that) was in part psychosomatic; a product of repeated iterations intended to create a very particular ethical disposition towards both nation and self. More work obviously needs to be done on this question, but I hope that what I have offered here will open up new paths of scholarly inquiry.

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