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Fathers of Budapest, Daughters of the Countryside: Recontextualizing Cultural Change in Fin-de-Siècle Hungary

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There is a historiographical consensus that there was a cultural paradigm shift in the first decade of the twentieth century in Hungary, though its exact characteristics have not been clearly defined. This article will demonstrate that there was a unifying theme in the works and philosophy of the generation that came to cultural relevance around 1905 which transcended ideological boundaries. The members of the new generation had a negative image of Budapest and idealized rural areas and rural communities. This essay will examine newspapers of the period, such as the Catholic *Alkotmány* (Constitution), the feminist *A Nő és a Társadalom* (Woman and Society), and the liberal *Nyugat* (The West) and argue that anti-Budapest sentiments and the idealization of the countryside were present in writings published in all of them. It will also show that novels from the period by Margit Kaffka and Terka Lux all revolve around criticism of Budapest and praise of the rural world.[1]

Keywords: fin-de-siècle Hungary, anti-urban sentiments, cultural change, literature, journalism, Budapest

In the second half of the nineteenth century in Hungary, the Liberal Party won eight elections in a row between 1875 and 1905. During this period, after having been officially created in 1873 and thanks in no small part to capitalist enterprise and laissez-faire liberalism, Budapest became a city described by historians such as Péter Hanák, John Lukacs, Mary Gluck, Judit Frigyesi, Gábor Gyáni, and Markian Prokopovych as a thriving metropolis with a booming cultural

1 This article is a shortened and revised version of an MA Dissertation submitted to Durham University in September 2020. The original text also included discussions of the Nagybánya Artists' Colony (with the help of István Réti's writings and the paintings by members of the group) and the poems and graphic design of Anna Lesznai. To meet the word count requirements of *The Hungarian Historical Review*, these sections were removed, but they too showcased heavy anti-Budapest sentiments and idyllic portrayals of rural Hungary, showing how widespread these attitudes were in the period.

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life.[2] Between 1870 and 1910, Budapest's population tripled from 270,685 to 863,735.[3] The number of schools more than doubled between 1875 and 1900, and as a result, by 1910, the city's literacy rate reached 90 percent.[4] Budapest's population was also ethnically (and linguistically) diverse.[5] The city's emerging entrepreneurial spirit also gave rise to numerous cafés all over Budapest, which served as venues where new newspapers, the products of an industry that exploded at the turn of the century, could be read.[6] However, on average, the rural parts of the country provided a sharp contrast to the capital. The economic growth rate of the villages and towns in rural Hungary was below the Eastern European average.[7] Literacy rates outside Budapest were significantly lower, at 50 percent.[8]

As this article will show, as a reaction to these processes, around 1905, a generation came of age that turned away from the metropolis and towards the glorification of the rural world and its perceived attributes. The period was a significant turning point in Hungary. In 1906, The Party of Independence and 48 ended the three-decade-long rule of the Liberal Party. The same year, Endre Ady published his influential collection of poems *Új Versek* (New Poems), and *The Hungarian Fauves* held their first exhibition.[9] 1907 saw the launch of the country's first feminist journal, *A Nő és a Társadalom* (Woman and Society) as well as antisemitic student protests against prominent Jewish lecturers.[10] These years also saw the launch of the influential journal *Nyugat* (The West) in 1908 and the foundation of the avantgarde group of painters *The Eight*. The cultural tide was turning.

2 See Frigyesi, *Béla Bartók;* Gluck, *Georg Lukács and His Generation*; Gyáni, *Identity and Urban Experience*; Hanák, *The Garden and The Workshop*; Lukacs, *Budapest 1900*; and Prokopovych, *In the Public Eye*.

3 Schwartz, "Budapest and its Heroines," 45.

4 Ibid., 46; Lukacs, *Budapest 1900*, 136.

5 Schwartz, "Budapest and its Heroines," 45.

6 Lukacs, *Budapest 1900*, 146; Szívós, "Fin-de-Siècle Budapest as a Center of Art," 164–68.

7 Schwartz, "Budapest and its Heroines," 46; Nemes, *Another Hungary*, 8.

8 Schwartz, "Budapest and its Heroines," 46; Lukacs, *Budapest 1900*, 146.

9 Stewart, "*In the Beginning was the Garden*," 34.

10 Gluck, *Georg Lukács and His Generation*, 60–61.

Anti-Urbanism and Cultural Change

The idealization of nature and landscape was a key feature of Romanticism, and emphasis on the negative consequences of modernization and urban living, in contrast with an idealized countryside, were prominent features of European culture in the nineteenth century.[11] Historians acknowledged that some form of anti-urbanism was present in European fin-de-siècle politics as part of a counterreaction to modernism and urbanization.[12] Georg Simmel's 1903 essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life" offers an excellent analysis of pro- and anti-metropolitan sentiments. Simmel wrote extensively about the alienating nature of the city.[13] Similarly, in Britain, J. A. Hobson worried about urbanization, suggesting that metropolitan citizens develop a mob mentality and receptiveness to sensationalist messaging.[14]

This article will show that similar anti-urban sentiments were present in Hungary in the same period. But the foundations for these sentiments and the image of Budapest as a "sinful city" were laid in nineteenth-century writings. As early as 1790, József Gvadányi's *Egy falusi nótáriusnak budai utazása* (A village notary's journey to Buda) criticized the inhabitants of Buda and Pest for following fashion trends and not adhering to the culinary and cultural traditions safeguarded by the people who lived in the rural parts of the country.[15] Several historians argued that, in the mid-nineteenth century, a number of Hungarian crime and mystery authors, drawing inspiration from *The Mysteries of Paris* series (1842–1843) by Eugéne Sue, depicted Budapest as a sinful city full of crime and prostitution.[16] They mention works such as Ignác Nagy's *Magyar titkok* (Hungarian secrets, 1844–1845), Lajos Kuthy's *Hazai rejtelmek* (Homeland mysteries, 1846–1847), József Kiss' *Budapesti rejtelmek* (Budapest mysteries, 1874), and Soma Gúthi's short stories and novellas (1907–1908). Mónika Mátay

11 See, for example, Blanning, *The Romantic Revolution*, 28–30, 138–57, 177–78; Ulin, *The Making of the English Countryside*.

12 See Kovács, G., "From the Guilty City to the Ideas of Alternative Urbanization," 99; Eszik, "Rural Reactions to Modernization."

13 Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life."

14 Hobson, *The Psychology of Jingoism*, 7–8.

15 Szilágyi and Vaderna "A nemzeti identitás összetettsége."

16 See, for example, Mátay, "Egy prostituált lemészárlása"; Mátay, "Egy reformkori író-celeb"; Márton-Simon, "The Hungarian Market of Nineteenth-Century Urban Nationalism"; Kálai, "'Minden rejtély vonz és ingerel'"; Kálai, "Médium, műfaj, mediáció"; Kálai, "Az intézményesülő magyar krimi egyik első példája"; Császtvay, "A hét bagoly esete a magyar irodalomban."

and András Horváth J. showed that sensationalized crime reporting in late nineteenth-century newspapers and the city's high suicide rates also contributed to the trope that Budapest was a "sinful city" which was dangerous for young rural women.[17]

Yet the anti-Budapest materials published later, in the first decade of the twentieth century, have special significance. When Nagy or Kuthy or let alone Gvadányi wrote their texts, Budapest had not yet even existed, given that it was only established as a unified city in 1873. As Károly Vörös argued, Budapest's prominent architectural, infrastructural, cultural, and economic features were only in the process of taking shape between 1873 and 1896 and could only be considered "complete" at the start of the millennium exhibition in 1896.[18]

The texts discussing the social and cultural ills of Budapest earlier in the nineteenth century describe those of a city in the process of being born and having the potential to change for the better.[19] As Anna Márton-Simon demonstrated, Nagy's *Magyar titkok*, while portraying Pest-Buda's sinful nature, contrasted the city with Paris and highlighted how it had not yet reached the same level of modernity infrastructurally or socially, and wished for faster urbanization.[20] Márton-Simon has also argued that Kuthy proposed efforts to protect the Hungarian identity of the city by ensuring that its inhabitants spoke Hungarian and had a commitment to Hungarian culture, as he feared the "potential and probable" loss of the nation's capital.[21] Finally, as she also notes, in Kiss's novel, Budapest appears as a construction site. The city's key attribute is constant change, making it capable of overcoming its flaws.[22] As for the 1880s–90s, Mónika Mátay demonstrates that there were two schools of thought in relation to the capital's problems with prostitution, and neither perceived it as an inherent feature of Budapest. One line of argument highlighted that it was due to social problems and poverty. The other blamed the alleged ill morals of the prostitutes themselves.[23]

17 See Mátay, "Egy prostituált lemészárlása"; Mátay, "Agycentizők a századfordulón"; Horváth J., "Költői látomás – főkapitányi láttamozás."

18 Vörös, "A világváros útján."

19 Miklós Lackó's study reveals that this was also true in the case of texts that were less critical of Budapest. See Lackó, "The Role of Budapest in Hungarian Literature," 356.

20 Márton-Simon, "The Hungarian Market of Nineteenth-Century Urban Nationalism," 10.

21 Ibid., 12–16.

22 Ibid., 15–16.

23 Mátay, "Egy prostituált lemészárlása."

As the discussion below shows, a significant difference compared to the nineteenth-century attitudes to Budapest is that while some of the post-1900 discourse around the metropolis still treated Budapest as a new city, unlike their predecessors, this generation was able to speak about a city with a more established identity. They perceived Budapest's "sinful" aspects not as something that could be changed but rather as already solidified, inherent features of the city. Additionally, it is worth noting that the aforementioned nineteenth-century examples of "sinful Budapest" depictions were mystery/crime novels or newspaper crime reports. In contrast, none of the novels that will be discussed in this essay are crime or mystery novels and none of the newspaper articles are crime reports, yet they all depict Budapest negatively. This shows a broad extension of the trope of the sinful city, indicating a wider cultural change in attitudes towards Budapest.

The idea of a cultural change in Hungary in the first decade of the twentieth century has not gone unnoticed by historians. There are plenty of narratives as to what led to the cultural paradigmatic shift of the early 1900s, which is often described as a conflict between two generations. Mary Gluck highlighted increasing disillusionment with capitalism as the chief cause of the conflict between two generations, which she labeled, in the title to the third chapter of her book, "Liberal Fathers and Postliberal Children."[24] Gluck's work served as an inspiration for this article, however her term "postliberal" is too narrow to describe the newly emerging generation, as it does not offer any indication of the values of this generation apart from them having turned their backs on liberalism.

Other historians, such as John Lukacs and Judit Frigyesi, acknowledged that the paradigm shift of early 1900s Hungary had some urban-rural dimensions.[25] However, the latter thought that the new generation lacked a shared ideological vision, and its members were only united by mutual personal connections and their desire for change, while the former stated that the main conflict of the period was between the Jewish and non-Jewish populations of the country. Miklós Lackó also wrote of an "anti-town mood," which he claimed grew stronger in turn-of-century Hungarian literature, though he did not elaborate on the ways in which it found expression.[26] Gábor Kovács acknowledged the presence of what he described as an anti-urban counterculture in fin-de-siècle

24 Gluck, *Georg Lukács and His Generation,* 21.

25 Lukacs, *Budapest 1900*, 186; Frigyesi, *Béla Bartók*, 74.

26 Lackó, "The Role of Budapest in Hungarian Literature," 354.

Hungary, however he perceived it as an exclusively rightwing phenomenon.[27] Finally, Robert Nemes explained the changing cultural landscape by arguing that the formerly influential ethnically Hungarian gentry was losing its influence and wealth and, as a result, turned to Catholic nationalism, which often contained a heavy strain of antisemitism.[28]

The discussion below argues that antisemitic tensions were only part of the main cultural conflict of the period. It demonstrates that there was a unifying theme in the works and philosophy of the generation that came to cultural relevance around 1905. As opposed to their fathers who built the metropolis, the members of the new generation had an overwhelmingly negative view of Budapest and an idyllic one of rural Hungary. These sentiments were present not only in rightwing circles, such as in the newspaper *Alkotmány* (Constitution) but also in liberal and feminist newspapers (such as *Nyugat* and *A Nő és a Társadalom*) and in the novels of the newly emerging female writers of the period, Terka Lux and Margit Kaffka.

If one seeks to understand the political changes in Hungary in the first decade of the twentieth century, then it is crucial to understand the cultural changes that took place around 1905, the only time the Liberal Party lost an election in fin-de-siècle Hungary. A more nuanced grasp of the cultural context of the Independence Party's victory furthers a better understanding of its electoral success. Rising nationalism eventually also played a part in the collapse of the Monarchy. By understanding the urban-rural divide in Hungary in the early 1900s, we might thus arrive at a more complex understanding of why Austria-Hungary collapsed. Finally, anti-Budapest rhetoric that portrayed the capital as a sinful city that lacked Hungarian character was also a feature of the emerging Horthy regime in the 1920s.[29] Understanding the origins of this rhetoric may lead to a better grasp of its later reemergence as an effective political tool.

"The Business of Abandoned Villages": Journalism

The turn of the century saw the rise of numerous new journals and newspapers in Hungary across the political spectrum. Budapest's liberal cultural elite could read, for example, *A Hét* (The Week), which first went into publication in 1890, and then *Nyugat* from 1908. Feminists could read *A Nő és a Társadalom*, which

27 Kovács, G., "From the Guilty City to the Ideas of Alternative Urbanization," 100.

28 Nemes, *Another Hungary*, 174.

29 Kovács, G., "From Guilty City to the Ideas of Alternative Urbanisation," 99.

was launched in 1907, and, in addition to the existing periodical *Magyar Állam* (The Hungarian State, 1868–1908), Catholic activists could enjoy *Alkotmány* between 1898 and 1919 and *Néppárt* (People's Party) between 1899 and 1909. The fact that anti-Budapest discourse was present in these ideologically diverse papers shows how prevalent anti-urban sentiments were in the first decade of the twentieth century.

The fact that *Alkotmány*, a periodical backed by Catholic radicals, contained heavily anti-urban and antisemitic passages should not come as a surprise. The role of the Catholic Church in the rise of nineteenth-century European antisemitism has been widely discussed.[30] What this section will focus on is the specific anti-urban nature of the articles in *Alkotmány*. Antisemitism in fin-de-siècle Hungary already has a rich historiography. From the Tiszaeszlár blood libel scandal to the resurgence of antisemitic Catholic radicalism in Austria-Hungary, the topic has been covered from various angles.[31] A substantial share of the secondary literature, however, discusses antisemitism or the rise of the far right in isolation, when in reality, turn-of-century antisemitism can also be understood as a manifestation of a wider metropolitan-rural divide.

It is a widely held view that antisemitism has had an anti-urban component in Europe.[32] By turning to antisemitic tropes, rightwing agrarians could summarize their anti-capitalist, anti-cosmopolitan sentiments.[33] There were three manifestations of anti-urban antisemitism in *Alkotmány*: opposition to capitalism, opposition to liberalism and cosmopolitanism, and opposition to Budapest's alleged lack of national character. An article from 1901 offers an example of the predominantly anti-capitalist antisemitism in the writings published in *Alkotmány*:

> Just look at the hundreds of millionaires in Lipótváros and its surrounding neighborhoods: the foreign breweries, slaughterhouses, and gamblers. They got rich, did not risk anything, and lived happily even before the state discounts because destroying the common man's small businesses created enough advantages for them already. […] The moving cosmopolitan capital, which has settled down in the country

30 See López, "Crusade and Mission"; and Krzywiec, "Between Anti- and Another Modernity."

31 For the rise of the far right, see for example Paksa, *A magyar szélsőjobboldal története*. For the Tiszaeszlár and its aftermath scandal, see Kövér, *A tiszaeszlári dráma*, and for Catholic radicalism, see Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna*.

32 Michel, "Anti-semitism in Early 20th-Century German Geography," 1.

33 Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution*, 121.

> out of *do ut des* reasons, has always tried to remain in close friendship with the liberal governments.[34]

While at first glance the text is simply anti-capitalist, there are several signs that demonstrate its antisemitism. For instance, the idea of a "cosmopolitan capital" that has good relations with liberal parties was a frequent antisemitic trope.[35] Additionally, the text specifies "*Lipótváros* and its neighborhoods" as the center of capitalist destruction. *Alkotmány* frequently portrayed this part of the city as an area defined by its Jewish population. Thus, the criticisms of the liberal elite, which the paper claims ignored the negative consequences of fin-de-siècle entrepreneurism and industrialization and the effects of large corporations on small businesses, are given an antisemitic coating either because the author genuinely thought this way or simply to appeal to the paper's readership by finding a scapegoat for complex issues that were the result of urbanization and capitalism.

Another example of anti-urban and anti-capitalist antisemitism is apparent in this article from 1904:

> Today, in the golden age of liberalism, the Jews are the lords of Hungary. […] They have the land, the money, the banks and loans, as well as the companies. […] The vast majority of the doctors and lawyers are Jewish. They swarmed the theaters, the arts, literature, and the press. They infiltrated the universities and teach at the academies, high schools, and community schools. […] First, they demand money from the taxpayer, then they want their rabbis and butchers to be above the law so that they can create a state within the state based on the laws of Moses.[36]

The article contains several familiar antisemitic tropes, such as references to banks and loans, opposition to liberalism, and anxiety about the emergence of a thriving Jewish society at the perceived expense of the wider Hungarian population. However, at closer look, the unifying theme among these professions, which are labeled "Jewish" in the article, is their metropolitan attributes. The middle-class professions of doctors and lawyers mostly thrive in cities. The vast majority of Hungary's papers were printed in Budapest, which was also the center of the country's art scene and the site of its most prestigious universities. Thus,

34 "Hegedüs diadala," 1.

35 Bihari, "Aspects of Anti-Semitism in Hungary 1915–1918," 68.

36 "A zsidók," 2.

the unifying theme that the antisemitic *Alkotmány* despised was not inherently aspects of Jewish life but the life and culture of the metropolis.

This life and culture most easily found expression in the newly emerging literary life. Therefore, it should be no surprise that the newly founded Budapest-based papers were a frequent target of *Alkotmány*'s journalists. *Alkotmány* even labeled one of the most prominent papers of the period, *A Hét*, a Jewish paper:

> We read in the Jewish papers that the weekly Jewish paper *A Hét* is celebrating the tenth anniversary of its first publication. The […] anniversary-edition, […] according to *Budapesti Napló* [Budapest Diary], was created by the entirety of the Hungarian literary world. Hold on! We happily concede that the Jewish literary are present in *A Hét*, a paper unfit for the desk of a Hungarian. However, no one dare say that "the entirety of the Hungarian literary world" merely comes from *Lipótváros* and its surrounding neighborhoods. Thank God, there are still plenty of Christian Hungarian writers. Jewish Hungarian writers do not exist. There are Jewish writers who write in Hungarian, that's it.[37]

As in the case of the earlier passages, it is worth examining the primary target of the attack in this passage. The journalist states that the values represented by *A Hét* are unworthy of being on the desk of a Hungarian person and cannot be considered part of the literary canon. *A Hét* primarily wrote for the middle-class liberals of Budapest, but the author purposefully identifies this societal segment with the Jews exclusively. For example, as was true of the earlier writing, this passage also includes the phrase *"Lipótváros* and its surrounding neighborhoods."

The fact that the author identifies "*Lipótváros* and its surrounding neighborhoods" as both predominantly Jewish and as the personification of everything the author seems to despise lays bare the core of *Alkotmány*'s value system. Contrary to what *Alkotmány* regularly indicates, *Lipótváros* district was not a Jewish-majority neighborhood. In both 1900 and 1906, only 28 percent of the district's population were Jewish, with the largest religious group being Roman Catholic (56 percent).[38] If *Alkotmány* really sought simply to stir hatred against the Jews as an ethnic group, they could have identified *Terézváros* district as their primary target, given that its Jewish population in its central areas almost matched its Catholic population (42 percent and 45 percent respectively).[39]

37 "Napihirek: (Az egész magyar literatura?)," 9.

38 "Budapest etnikai adatbázisa (1850–1950)."

39 Ibid.

However, the key lies in the class composition of the two districts. While *Lipótváros* was an affluent neighborhood, *Terézváros* was an impoverished district.[40] Thus, *Alkotmány* did not simply attack Jews. Rather, it vilified Jews who allegedly had benefited from urbanization and capitalism, who were perceived by the periodical as more influential. Any admission that the Hungarian elites had also taken part in the creation of an urban, liberal, and capitalist new Hungary would not have fit their narrative. With exaggerations, *Alkotmány* could portray the middle-class Jewish minority of *Lipótváros*, who fit the prevalent antisemitic stereotypes because of their wealth and influence in the city, as powerful foreign figures intent on destroying Hungarian values. Thus, the antisemitism of Catholic radicals in Hungary was heavily influenced by their contempt for a cosmopolitan, liberal Budapest, and not vice-versa.

One finds further support for this conclusion in the numerous articles published in *Alkotmány* in which antisemitism is merely a smaller part of a wider criticism of liberalism and cosmopolitanism. An article printed in *Alkotmány* in late 1900 argues that liberalism had once been a Hungarian national project but now exclusively had come to serve cosmopolitanism:

> Liberalism ceased to be Hungarian. It became cosmopolitan. […] Cosmopolitan liberalism in its Hungarian disguise merely preaches [tolerance] but does not practice it. It preaches patriotism yet excludes all anti-liberal Hungarian Christians. It preaches religious freedom yet does not satisfy the deeply hurt Catholics but retreats from the Jews.[41]

Thus, for the author of this article the primary grievance concerned the cosmopolitan aspects of liberalism. Catholic Hungarians were allegedly excluded from the liberal project. It is beyond the scope of this article to examine the extent to which claims that the Liberal Party was intolerant of Catholics or Hungarian nationalists are legitimate, but it is worth bearing in mind that the liberal Hungarian elite often compromised on the public expression of certain manifestations of Hungarian identity by censoring lyrics if imperial delegations were present at plays or by refusing to attend memorials and funerals of revolutionary heroes in an official capacity.[42]

40 Gluck, *The Invisible Jewish Budapest*, 22–28.

41 "Tanulságok," 1.

42 Bede, *Populism without the People*, 10. See also Prokopovych, "Scandal at the Opera"; Koranyi, "The Thirteen Martyrs of Arad," 6; Vari, "The Nation in the City," 215; Barenscott, "Trafficking in Photographs," 36.

This article is also noteworthy because it recognizes the emerging counter-culture that started to find its foot around the time the article was published: "Cosmopolitan liberalism will not always be present in Hungary. It is already on its way out. […] Hungarian Christians started to organize politically and economically. They started to organize in literature, in science, and in schools."[43]

The Catholic radicals recognized the beginnings of certain cultural processes that in five years' time would contribute to the outcome of the 1905 elections. *Alkotmány* itself had gone into publication in 1898, only two years before the article was printed, and the Catholic People's Party was founded in 1895.

In an earlier article published in *Alkotmány,* there was an explicit link between the downfall of the gentry articulated by Robert Nemes and the emerging cultural anxiety and anti-metropolitan, anti-urban sentiments:

> In one or two years, the unique representatives of the middle classes, the gentry, will be a thing of the past. […] Because the inhabitants of the patriarchal noble mansions are disappearing from the villages, and their place is being taken over by some cosmopolitan-type landowners. The gentry goes to the city and sets camp in the county or national bureaus just to become [a clerk]. […] There is no better way for Hungarian society to rid itself of its cosmopolitan character than strengthening the class for whom every inspiration comes from the land: the Hungarian land soaked in the blood of our ancestors.[44]

The article goes on to call the landowners "the cosmopolitan type race, whose land grabs have intensified in the past decades," clearly claiming that it was Jewish landowners who had acquired the lands of the lower gentry.[45] The entire article is perhaps the clearest example of *Alkotmány*'s many pieces that reflect an important trend in the *Zeitgeist:* opposition to the established city culture, with its liberal politics, disappearing Hungarian gentry, and presence of Jews.

Interestingly, the notion that Budapest was "un-Hungarian" appeared not only in the writings of radical Catholics but also in the liberal press. In the prominent, Western-oriented literary journal *Nyugat*, Aladár Schöpflin, a liberal critic who was the first to spot several later literary giants, discussed the potential reason for the differences between the city and the rest of the country.[46]

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43 "Tanulságok," 1–2.

44 Csernay, "A pusztuló gentry," 1.

45 Ibid., 1.

46 "Schöpflin Aladár," in *Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon.*

> Hungarians never had a city. The second they started to grow, they were crushed by the horrors of history. […] The cities that slowly but surely started to develop, Buda, Pest, Arad, Temesvár, and Nagyvárad, were all formed of German elements, and at the beginning of the nineteenth century, they were exclusively German. Ethnic Hungarians lived in villages.[47]

Thus, we see how Schöpflin attributes the metropolitan-urban divide to historical and ethnic origins. The cities were predominantly German, and Hungarians lived in villages and towns. In his interpretation, it is this ethnic conflict that resulted in the generational conflict of his times:

> It was the generation of our fathers that made Budapest Hungarian. […] Very few of the people of Budapest who bear original Hungarian names were actually born in Budapest. The majority of ethnic Hungarians are still alien in the capital. […] The present ruling generation still hasn't formed Budapest to their own image. Parliament is managing the country's business in a county-like and village-like manner. […] In Budapest's public life, we rarely see any ethnic Hungarians: they are still more interested in the business of abandoned villages or counties than that of the capital in which they live and in which their sons will live.[48]

It is difficult to confirm Schöpflin's contentions concerning the other cities he mentions (detailed ethnographic data regarding those cities is only available from 1880), but it is true that in Pest-Buda, even in 1850, 49 percent of the population identified as German and only 31 percent as Hungarian, which does partially support his claims.[49] However, given that there was a significant Hungarian population earlier, it is an exaggeration to say that very few Hungarians were born in Budapest.

Schöpflin wrote this article in 1908, two years after the coalition led by the Party of Independence formed its government. Therefore, by the "present ruling generation" Schöpflin means the nationalist intelligentsia of the Party of Independence and its coalition partners, who were hostile to the metropolis. For many of the ethnic Hungarians who came from outside the city's borders, Budapest felt unfamiliar and foreign despite the fact that most of the denizens of the city spoke Hungarian by the early 1900s. However, the greatest difference

47 Schöpflin, "A város."

48 Ibid.

49 "Budapest etnikai adatbázisa (1850–1950)."

between them and the liberal, Hungarian-speaking children of the German middle class was that they did not consider Budapest's "un-Hungarian" nature inherently negative. The liberal intelligentsia's problem with the capital, as shown through Margit Kaffka's writings, was something entirely different. It is also evident, on the basis of Schöpflin contentions, that some grievances regarding the liberal negligence of rural Hungary in favor of Budapest were legitimate. Schöpflin dismissed those who tried to improve small town communities by labeling them "abandoned villages and counties."

Dissatisfaction with the capital was also present in periodicals in which one would not necessarily have expected to find it. As elsewhere in Europe, discussions of gender-based inequality were becoming part of the discourses of the political and cultural mainstream. Partially thanks to capitalist economic development, the idea of the "new woman," who could express herself through her profession, became prominent.[50] To help facilitate these discussions, official feminist organizations were formed, which also led to more representation of women in contemporary periodicals. In 1904, Róza Bédy-Schwimmer and Vilma Glüklich founded the Feminist Association, which started publishing its own journal, *A Nő és a Társadalom*, in 1907.[51]

Dóra Czeferner has argued that the Feminist Association's first official journal played an important role in spreading feminist ideas both in Budapest and outside the capital.[52] The journal was distributed freely to members of the association (there were 2,100 members in 1907 and 5,175 in 1914) and also had additional subscribers, plus a readership in cafés, restaurants, and reading groups.[53] While this may not seem a high number, Czeferner notes that this meant a larger readership than that of similar publications had in Austria.[54] Moreover, regardless of the readership, as the official outlet of the Hungarian Feminist Association, *A Nő és a Társadalom* is an invaluable source on mainstream contemporary feminist thinking.

Contrary to what one would expect, feminist journalists considered Budapest the hotbed of patriarchy, not the more traditional rural towns and villages. The first issues of *A Nő és a Társadalom*, for instance, regularly published reports on the operations of feminist organizations outside Budapest as well as calls for

50 Kádár, *Engedelmes lázadók*, 19.

51 Stewart, "*In the Beginning was the Garden*," 301.

52 Czeferner, "Schwimmer Rózsa lapszerkesztői tevékenysége," 335.

53 Czeferner, *Kultúrmisszió vagy propaganda*, 123–26.

54 Ibid., 123.

women to move to the countryside. A 1908 issue of the journal started with a report on the operation of the local feminist organization of Balmazújváros (a town in the Northern Great Plain). The extensive report, authored by Róza Bédy-Schwimmer (1877–1948), the editor-in-chief of the paper, wrote in admiration of the Balmazújváros group and dismissed those who looked down on feminists outside the capital:

> This is not a joke. This is much more than "Mucsa feminism." This doesn't mean that the wives and daughters of Balmazújváros's educated elite have sworn an oath to the flag of feminism. This means much more. […] In Balmazújváros, the Feminist Organization can be found in the center of the National Peasant Party.[55]

The fact that Bédy-Schwimmer felt it important to defend feminists in rural Hungary from condescending terms such as "Mucsa" (a slur of sorts against the people of rural Hungary which implied backwardness) indicates that many before her must have looked down on them. The text clearly has a class element as well. By drawing comparisons with the National Peasant Party and dismissing the "wives and daughters of the Balmazújváros elite," the article reinforces the idea that the group is popular among the lower classes of Balmazújváros as well.

A Nő és a Társadalom not only praised the feminists of rural Hungary but also actively encouraged its readers to move out of the overcrowded Budapest, as the rural world offered a better life for them. An earlier issue of the paper featured an article by the president of The Feminist Association, Janka Groszmann, which offered the following argument:

> Until the evolution and expansion [of cities] were not having a negative effect on the citizens, it bothered no one. However, now the skyscrapers, the overcrowded flats, the noise of the metropolis traffic, the rush, and the nervous pace made it possible to change our approach to how we think about urban development.[56]

Groszmann goes on to describe the city as lacking air and vegetation, and she argues that the idea of building villas with plenty of green spaces will only benefit the well-off.[57] She argues that for women of more modest means, there is only one solution that will also help them break out of the patriarchal system:

55 Bédy-Schwimmer, "Nőmozgalom Balmazújvárosban," 143.

56 Groszmann, "Fővárosi nőtisztviselők vidéken," 42.

57 Ibid., 42.

> Those who do not have strong practical or emotional ties to the capital can easily help the situation by moving to rural areas, at least for a few years. […] Fathers are proud if their sons […] succeed in a different environment. But they would under no circumstances allow their daughters to explore the world. Unfortunately, the girls don't notice how humiliating these loving fears are either. […] Just like those who are opposed to feminism, people who oppose opportunities for women to work in different towns […] keep listing the reasons that haven't proven totally unfounded during the long fight for economic independence for women.[58]

Groszmann then lists other benefits of rural life:

> Exercise, walking, and studying are all wonderful ways of spending the evening leisure time, and there is much more time and opportunity for these in rural areas than in the metropolis. […] For the individual, the easier livelihood and the healthier environment both make living in the rural world an experience much to be recommended, and the feminist movement also demands that its members help women organize throughout the country, not just in the capital.[59]

Groszmann's articles encapsulate contemporary attitudes to Budapest and the rural world. She considered life in overcrowded Budapest undesirable, and she encouraged women to move to the countryside.

Given that regardless of one's political affiliation, journalists blamed the capital for the contemporary social and political developments they opposed, it is worth considering whether it was actually Budapest they had a problem with or just its imagined attributes. After all, the Catholic radicals of *Alkotmány* blamed Budapest for the decline of the patriarchy, while the feminists encouraged women to leave it because they claimed the city upheld its institution. As the excerpts indicate, the capital did genuinely contain some elements these two groups found undesirable. *Alkotmány* and the Catholic radicals disliked cosmopolitanism because it directly contradicted their values. Feminists could rightfully be wary of the increased accumulation of wealth and capital by businessmen, which increased their power and consequently women's reliance on them. However, Catholic radicals and feminists projected other disliked features of their times

58 Ibid., 43.

59 Ibid., 43.

that were otherwise unrelated to the capital. They thus gave the city of Budapest exclusively negative connotations, effectively demonizing it.

Their ideas about rural Hungary were also often naive or false. *A Nő és a Társadalom* may have celebrated the feminists of Balmazújváros, but in reality, their feminist organization had a much stronger foothold in Budapest than anywhere else.[60] *Alkotmány*'s journalists, who falsely identified Jews as the sole representatives of the complex forces that decreased their cultural influence, naively or purposefully used an imagined topography of Budapest and Hungary. In reality, there was a significant Jewish population in the Hungarian countryside and liberalism and capitalism were present outside the metropolis as well.

The Budapest Flâneuse: Women's Literature

The early years of the twentieth century saw an increased representation of women in literary life. A number of public spaces opened up for women, some of whom even got to contribute to the era's most influential journals.[61] The women in this chapter, Terka Lux and Margit Kaffka, represented different branches and different degrees of commitment to feminism. Yet they both articulated similar ideas about the relationship between Budapest and rural Hungary.

Lux wrote extensively about life in Budapest as experienced by women. These novels contain explicit social criticism regarding life in the metropolis, yet they are often analyzed only in the context of women's literature. By understanding them as part of a wider cultural paradigm shift, one discovers other themes in their pages.

Born in Szilágysomlyó and having grown up in poverty, Terka Lux (1873–1938) was a social democratic feminist, meaning she was in favor of female suffrage but her priorities were to address the social and economic inequalities of women.[62] She wrote a number of novels and short stories, most of which centered around the female experience of the capital's social dynamics.[63] Two of these novels, *Leányok* (Girls) and *Budapest*, articulate her thoughts on life in the capital most clearly. Both of these books star young women from rural Hungary, and follow their coming of age as they explore the metropolis.

60 Kádár, *Engedelmes lázadók,* 19.

61 Ibid., 20; Borgos and Szilágyi, "Bevezetés," 8.

62 "Lux Terka," in *Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon*; Kádár, *Engedelmes lázadók,* 52; "Lux Terka," in *Írónők a hálón*.

63 Kádár, *Engedelmes lázadók*, 44.

Leányok, published in 1906, follows the story of three maids in Budapest, Juli, Janka, and Baba, who, like most maids in the period, come to the capital from rural communities. All three protagonists face challenges and meet characters who exemplify the world of Budapest at the time. There are several ways in which Lux portrays the city as the "villain" of the book. The first is the plot and the overall message of the novel. All three protagonists are seduced by some aspect of city life. Two of them fail to resist. Baba's arc is the clearest manifestation of the city's villainy. She tries to pursue an acting career with some degree of success. She ends up falling in love and becomes pregnant. The man disappears from her life, so she tries to abort the child, but complications arise, and she does not survive the procedure.

The city ruins Janka's life in a different way. Her main problem is that she represents "the traditional woman" who, because of her values, can be more easily exploited in the big city. Janka refuses to study anything apart from music in the expectation that she can meet and marry a rich man. Her wish is fulfilled, but she ends up marrying a man she does not love at all.

The only protagonist who resists the temptations of the city and ends up leading a happy life is Juli. She represents "the New Woman" who, alongside her day job, studies to be a nurse. She encounters similar temptations as Baba and Juli, but resists them. She rejects free love, and when Baba asks for her help with her abortion, she refuses on moral grounds. Her "reward" will be to move back to rural Hungary and marry. But unlike Janka, she *chooses* to marry, and she is not forced into marriage because she has no other option. She is free to choose how she performs her femininity.

This plot clearly reflects Lux's type of feminism and contemporary fears. She condemned free love, which she thought led to the destruction of family unity (hence Lux's strong condemnation of abortion in her novel).[64] Budapest is the "villain" of the novel because it poses a threat to young women, who will give up on their familial duties by encouraging them to love freely. Juli "wins the game" because she resists the temptations of the city and moves to Lux's idea of the more peaceful, morally pure rural world.

Judit Kádár argues that this ending symbolizes the dominance of the rural patriarchy.[65] However, the message of the novel is slightly more complex. As she noted, Lux considered starting a family the ideal way of performing femininity,

64 "Lux Terka," in *Írónők a hálón*.

65 Kádár, *Engedelmes lázadók*, 46.

but women had to be economically independent and able to *choose* their path and the man whom they would marry.[66] Thus, the rural world is not portrayed as a place full of prejudice. Rather, it is where Juli's femininity can be expressed ideally as a result of her choice. As a qualified nurse, she will be able to provide for her family independently if necessary.

The subjective portrayal of life in Budapest does not end at *Leányok*'s plot. Lux uses her literary skills to paint a negative, somber, and sometimes frightening picture of the city. She introduces it from the point of view of young women. Whenever Lux describes the exterior of the city, her words create a negatively charged environment:

> It was a dark, dirty, and narrow garden in Király Street, full of boxes and carts. Pale and dirty children were playing amongst the crates. In the sombre, quiet, and lukewarm September rain, the girls could hear the deafening screeches of the streets through the open gate. Baba looked from right to left, glaring at the tall buildings while she listened to the ugly, hellish noise of the city almost lustfully.[67]

Lux also uses Budapest's street aesthetics to convey the degree of the poverty in which her characters live. She even goes so far as to blame the city's atmosphere for the misery of those living in it:

> [The walls of the house] were crumbling. […] The chimneys kept fuming filthy, thick smoke all day. It smelled like soot. The smoke covered everything like a nightmare. It was in the air, in the houses, and even in people's souls. The air is smothering, the houses are filthy from the inside out, and the workers are exhausted and apathetic. Their souls are full of sorrow.[68]

The two excerpts show that, in Lux's version of the capital, there is something inherently bad in the Budapest air that makes the lives of the city's inhabitants terrible.

Budapest, Lux's better-known novel, explores similar themes but less skillfully than its predecessor. In the introduction, Lux openly states that the book should be read as a Budapest-guidebook. This guidebook can both be interpreted literally but also as a guidebook to Budapest's society and its character:

> The reader should treat my writing like an illustrated guidebook to Budapest. […] This is our Budapest. […] The scorned, despised,

66 Kádár, "Two Austro-Hungarian Women Writers," 31.

67 Lux, *Leányok*, 5.

68 Ibid., 49.

> excluded, and profaned stone-lady, who […] takes away everything; happiness, peace, honor, and life.[69]

Similarly to *Leányok*, *Budapest* is also about a young woman who is tempted by various stereotypical challenges and characters in the city. Fáni Schneider, however, unlike Juli in *Leányok*, learns to fight back and becomes as immoral as the city itself. At one point, she even says, "[t]his was the city that stole everything from me! Now it's my turn to take everything from it."[70] Fáni becomes disillusioned and arrogant by the end of the novel, suggesting the corrupting nature of the capital.

Like in her previous book, Lux makes the city the main villain of the story. Crucially, Fáni encounters the first "immoral" temptation on its streets in the form of a sculptor who becomes her lover.[71] Elsewhere, the book's characters openly articulate Lux's opinions of the city to an almost comically blatant extent:

> "They all said the street taught them! The street seduced them. […] You filthy capital! You!" And she spat on the street. "Everything belongs to you: honor, money, land, life! Everything belongs to the [financial] capital. To the palaces! To this!"[72]

Thus, in *Budapest*, Lux names the main reason why the city is so sinful and corrupt. She aims to show throughout the novel that it is the rule of capital that makes Budapest a terrible place for young women to live in.[73]

Thus, similarly to some of the nationalists, Lux's main problem with Budapest was the capitalist world that flourished there. Lux portrayed the capital in a heavily distorted way by completely ignoring the fact that, though undoubtedly stronger in the metropolis, capitalism was also present in rural Hungary. However, contrary to the Catholic radicals, she does not equate capitalism with the Jews or cosmopolitanism. The accumulation of capital appears as the main problem rather than as a symptom of something else.

It would be impossible to discuss fin-de-siècle women's literature in Hungary without examining the works of its most famous representative, Margit Kaffka (1880–1918). Kaffka is an ideal choice to explore the social dynamics of

69 Lux, *Budapest*, 4.
70 Ibid., 19.
71 Ibid., 8.
72 Ibid., 11–12.
73 Also see, ibid., 15 and 42.

Budapest and rural Hungary from a female point of view, as she experienced life in both places in the same era. She was born in Carei, or Nagykároly by its Hungarian name, a small town in Transylvania.[74] After spending time as a teacher in Miskolc, Kaffka rose to prominence in Budapest as the leading woman writer of the period.[75] In his analysis of her novel *Színek és évek* (Colours and years), Robert Nemes examines the ways in which Kaffka was able to write social commentary concerning the crisis of the gentry as well as the hierarchy of Budapest and rural towns.[76]

Állomások (Stations), one of Kaffka's other novels, also offers criticism of Budapest's liberal elite, a longing for the countryside, and most crucially, an example of how Kaffka also portrayed Budapest as the city of sin. While the first edition of the novel was published in 1914, which is slightly later than the period discussed in this article, due to its autobiographical nature and the story building on the author's past experiences, it deals with the relevant period and thus can be considered a valuable source on perceptions of the culture of Budapest around 1905.

Györgyi Horváth aptly referred to Kaffka as a flâneuse, i.e. a female wanderer who observes the city.[77] *Állomások* provides an excellent portrayal of contemporary Budapest and its society. The semi-autobiographical novel follows the life of Éva Rosztoky, a painter from rural Hungary who joins Budapest's elite circles. Kaffka was rather critical of this elite, as she felt that they tried to fulfil the social expectations of the city instead of expressing their individuality. She thought this was no different from the prejudices for which many criticized the world of rural Hungary. She communicates this criticism through her main character in *Állomások*:

> There were others in this "city-center" group who she looked down on. She knew well that all their laws are external. They all had their prejudices, which were only distinguished from the prejudices of the stricter country people by their false and easily trickable nature.[78]

Kaffka's Budapest was not only judgmental but, similarly to Terka Lux's interpretation of the capital, it was also the very embodiment of sinfulness.

74 Kádár, *Engedelmes lázadók*, 101.

75 Borgos, "'Mit csinálhatok én az embervoltommal,'" 35–37.

76 Nemes, *Another Hungary*, 216–17.

77 Horváth, Gy., "Kószálónők a régi Budapesten," 164.

78 Kaffka, "Állomások," 115.

Towards the end of the novel, Éva and her bohemian friends retire to the hills behind Buda and look at the city from the distance with disgust. This provides a literary perspective from which Kaffka can observe and describe the entire metropolis and label it a "rioting, bloody, hungry, and poisoned city."[79] Similarly, in the final pages of the book, Éva is sitting on a tram and reflecting on the city while observing her surroundings:

> Oh this city! This hungry city, this poisoned city! […] Where is that contagious substance, that rotting mushroom that makes everything good, beautiful, and promising start corrode, collapse, or disintegrate? Is it in the air or is it under the cobblestones?[80]

As these excerpts make clear, like Lux, Kaffka thought that there was something inherently bad and corrupting in the city.

Given Budapest's allegedly sinful nature, Kaffka's Éva Rosztoky needed a more peaceful place to which she could escape, and this was her childhood home, Aranyoskút. In *Állomások*, Kaffka, despite her criticism of its dullness, portrays Aranyoskút and the surrounding countryside in an idyllic, peaceful, and sometimes even sensual way, in contrast to the busy, "poisonous" Budapest. For example:

> They were unreserved, free, and happy there. They loved each other "en plein air" under the sunshine, in the luscious, evergreen valley. Here, in the beginning, their nice, naive, and easy joy for life was sincere.[81]

Kaffka also suggests in her novel that, in contrast to the world of rural Hungary, Budapest did not have its own culture. The culture of the city was, in her depiction, merely an adaptation of that of its rural immigrants. In the early stages of the story, Éva has a conversation with Róbert Vajda, her first love interest in the novel. Vajda delivers the following lines, with which Éva agrees:

> Hungary, its entire culture […] is so rural, so village-like [*falusi*], it tastes of peasants; just like us. That's not surprising, given that the entire population of Greater Budapest, this whole generation, emigrated from the rural areas. That's where they bring their attitudes, traditions, accents, everything from. […] Budapest is a new city. It hasn't created its own culture yet.[82]

79 Ibid., 257–58.

80 Ibid., 282.

81 Ibid., 92.

82 Ibid., 109.

Thus, according to Kaffka, Budapest does not yet have a unique culture, and the only way its artistic elite can become accomplished is by evoking the cultural imagery of the rural world from which they came.

Terka Lux and Margit Kaffka shared several grievances concerning the metropolis with the nationalist, feminist, and liberal journalists, be it Lux's critique of Budapest's alleged immorality and rampant capitalism or Kaffka's idea of a city without a unique culture. Lux and Kaffka, however, nonetheless insist that they love the city despite their harsh criticism of it. In her introduction to *Budapest*, Lux makes it clear that she loves the city.[83] Similarly, during the concluding thoughts of *Állomások*, Éva remarks that alongside its inherent "poison," Budapest also contains plenty of good that "forces its inhabitants to love it anyway."[84]

What was it in the capital that attracted them to it, despite its alleged sinfulness? Lux answers this question:

> I love [Budapest] because […] Fáni Schneider, despite its genial rottenness, retained a lot of her nice, childish traits. […] I love Budapest, this poor Fáni Schneider with a bad reputation. No one concluded how she acquired this rottenness. Was it genetics or trauma? […] The world does not ask how you gained your sin, only how you lost your morals. I don't think I'll succeed, but I'll try to find the answer to this.[85]

With this introduction, Lux makes it clear that Fáni's fate can be interpreted as an allegory for Budapest.[86] With this in mind, the line "This was the city that stole everything from me! Now it's my turn to take everything from it." becomes the key to our understanding of the author's image of Budapest. The secondary literature suggests that Lux did not blame the city for its character.[87]

The aforementioned line also answers a key question with which Lux grappled for years: Why was Budapest ruining the lives of its inhabitants? Lux suggests that modern Budapest and its culture had emerged out of capitalism, and that capitalism inherently meant the immoral exploitation of its citizens, and the only way to uphold living standards and booming culture in the city was to continue this process of exploitation, especially of newcomers.

83 Lux, *Budapest*, 5.

84 Kaffka, "Állomások," 282.

85 Lux, *Budapest*, 5.

86 Kovács, B., "A nő, ha ír – A nő, ha fejlődik"; "Lux Terka," in *Írónők a hálón.*

87 "Lux Terka," in *Írónők a hálón.*

Margit Kaffka did not leave such clear statements behind. Her correspondence with her friends and some parts of *Állomások*, however, nonetheless offer clues to her views. Between 1902 and 1905, Kaffka was teaching in Miskolc, a city in northeastern Hungary.[88] During her stay, she wrote the following in a letter to fellow poet Oszkár Gellért:

> This is a boring, dusty farmer's town *[csizmadiaváros]*. […] The school is full of ink marks, my students are all hopeless idiots, and my grandmother insists that I marry. […] There are no emotions, and I couldn't even find any in this environment. Every matter of the "heart" here is blindly tied to practical success in life. […] Don't laugh, but I need a superior, more sophisticated life, which I had for three years in the capital. You love to chide the capital, but I know that you actually love it.[89]

It is evident from this letter that Kaffka had a problem with rural Hungary. She found it uninspiring and was also bothered by its oppressive social conservatism. She revealed this sentiment in *Állomások* when her main character, Éva Rosztoky expresses her relief that her children will grow up in Budapest, because there they "at least have purpose" and "there is someone to educate them," unlike in Aranyoskút.[90]

Thus, for Kaffka, the main argument in support of living in Budapest is that there were more opportunities for a good life and individual self-expression than elsewhere. As Róbert Vajda says in *Állomások*, Budapest may not be the birthplace of unique style and culture, but for Kaffka, it was certainly the only place where culture could blossom. She might have joked about Oszkár Gellért and the metropolitan artists "chiding" Budapest while simultaneously loving it, but by the time she wrote *Állomások*, she was doing the same.

Conclusion

This article offered a new way to contextualize a major cultural shift in fin-de-siècle Hungary. It argued that there was a common theme in the writings of members of the generation that reached professional maturity shortly after the turn of the century. This generation turned towards the countryside, and in doing so, they broke with their parents, who were members of the cosmopolitan

88 Nemes, *Another Hungary*, 212.

89 Kaffka, "Gellért Oszkárnak," 103.

90 Kaffka, "Állomások," 116.

generation that had built the capital city. It demonstrated how, in their frequent attacks on the Jewish population of the country, the antisemitic Catholic radicals writing for *Alkotmány* mostly targeted aspects of metropolitan life, such as cosmopolitanism, liberalism, and emerging multiculturalism. This paper does not question the scale or significance of antisemitism on the Hungarian right at the turn of the century, but it does argue that this form of Catholic antisemitism was part of a wider pattern of dissatisfaction with the Budapest-centric status quo of the previous 30 years rather than an entirely independent phenomenon. It also demonstrated how feminist journalists and female authors depicted Budapest as a seductive city of sin and rural Hungary as a safe and calm place that was ideal for women. As the article demonstrated, even the figures who, by their own admission, loved the capital portrayed it overwhelmingly negatively. As the paper showed, the portrayal of the metropolis as sinful appeared to be universally relatable, vastly expanding its reach from its nineteenth-century confines of urban crime writing. Unlike most of the writings about Pest-Buda and, after 1873, Budapest in the nineteenth century, post-1900 discourses about the city concerned a metropolis with an already established identity, not one that was being formed.

This article has not discussed another important group that was formed in the first decade of the twentieth century. The Galilei Circle, a group of atheist freethinkers, was also founded in 1908. Their philosophy, however, differed from those discussed in this chapter, as they by no means idealized the rural world. As Péter Csunderlik has demonstrated, members of the circle regularly referred to rural Hungary as "black country," implying the disproportional and in their view negative and backwards influence of the clergy on villages, where the "life of the peasantry was dire."[91]

However, Csunderlik's monograph also revealed that the Galilei Circle did try to reach out to rural communities. They actively discussed and called for the redistribution of church land in the provinces and, in the 1910s, prepared to popularize their goals in villages.[92] They even explicitly stated that such propaganda activities should be undertaken by members who are from the provinces and can "speak the language of the peasantry."[93] Given that the Galilei Circle's framing of these rural societal issues was to help the peasantry, it could

91 Csunderlik, *A Galilei Kör története*, 313–14.

92 Ibid., 354–69.

93 Ibid., 357.

be argued that they were not that dissimilar to other members of their generation discussed in this article.

On the other hand, the extended version of Csunderlik's study demonstrates that while the Galilei Circle supported feminist demands, it was rather critical of the Feminist Association for accepting a limited extension of female suffrage instead of a full, universal one.[94] Additionally, the first publication of their flagship journal *Szabadgondolat* (Free Thought) in 1911 falls just outside the first decade of the twentieth century (the focus of this article), and their anti-clerical ideology was a reaction to the strengthening of "clerical forces."[95] Therefore, in a way, the Galilei Circle and its ideology, while it accepted some of the basic tenets of cultural change, is an early reaction to the cultural processes (such as the rise of Catholic radicalism) discussed in this article. Further research could reveal the nuances of this complex relationship.

This article showed that despite their expression of grievances regarding Budapest's elitism, unregulated capitalism, and neglect of its lower classes, both the negative portrayals they offered of Budapest and the idealized visions they crafted of rural Hungary were exactly that: a dream world or a constructed nightmare of the given writer's hopes and fears. The Catholic radicals might have perceived Budapest to be an entirely Jewish city and *Lipótváros* an entirely Jewish district, but both in fact were multiethnic. Ethnic Hungarians were just as present as Jews or Germans, and they also helped shape and build Budapest and its culture. Feminists such as Terka Lux or Róza Bédy-Schwimmer might have considered the capital dangerous for women, but the reality was that women outside Budapest were more likely to be exposed to the workings of the patriarchy.

One could rightfully ask why, if frustration with Budapest was so widespread, was there no movement that could unify these voices? One could argue in response, however, that there was indeed a political movement that managed to do so. In 1905, the Party of Independence and its coalition partners did incorporate some anti-Budapest elements into their campaign, and they were more electorally successful in rural Hungary than in the capital.[96] Their success was tied to the cultural processes described in the paper. Still, the 1905 coalition cannot exclusively be labeled a coherent anti-Budapest movement. After all, apart

94 Csunderlik, *Radikálisok, szabadgondolkodók, ateisták*, 194–95.

95 Csunderlik, *A Galilei Kör története*, 297–98.

96 Bede, *Populism without the People*, 44–45.

from *Alkotmány*, no protagonists of this paper participated in the popularisation of the 48ers or their coalition partners.

The answer to the question could be that the grievances of all these various groups concerning the capital were mere projections that often contradicted each other. The Catholic radicals dreaded the influence of Budapest because it undermined the patriarchy, while feminists encouraged women to leave the city for rural Hungary so that they could escape their controlling fathers. Due to these contradictions, it is difficult to say whether there was one common element that could explain why so many different figures disliked the capital. There certainly are recurring themes, such as anti-capitalism. But upon closer examination, we may conclude that it was the highly individualistic culture of Budapest that many across the political spectrum despised. After all, both feminism and Catholic radicalism had a preference for the community over the individual.

The real significance of this fin-de-siècle cultural shift only became truly apparent in the Horthy era. One of the basic pillars of the regime was its anti-Budapest sentiments. The regime's propaganda machine spread the narrative of the capital as a "sinful city" that was supposedly incompatible with national values.[97] This article aimed to contribute to our understanding of the origins of these sentiments. The generation of Hungarians discussed above was not only connected by personal relations, nor were they merely critics of the liberals. They also were not defined exclusively by antisemitism.

Crucially, this cultural shift took place at a time when women writers who had arrived from rural Hungary began to be influential. Margit Kaffka, Terka Lux, and the journalists of *A Nő és a Társadalom* were all able to tell stories that acknowledged the struggles of metropolitan life, aspects of which were particularly harmful for women. Without them, many legitimate concerns regarding metropolitan life would have remained unheard. In the first decade of the twentieth century, as the businessmen who had built Budapest reached old age, a new generation came to artistic maturity, this time with a number of prominent female figures in their ranks. At the turn of the century, shortly after the sun set for the fathers of Budapest, it rose again for the daughters of the countryside.

97 Kovács, G., "From Guilty City to the Ideas of Alternative Urbanisation," 99.

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