Fragments of memory
Art History in Transition

In the CEU tradition (or at least that of the History Department) retiring lecturers customarily give a farewell lecture, a sort of intellectual autobiography. Ideally this should not simply be an extended ego-trip, but rather a survey of the different inspirations, influences and decisive professional acquaintances which have formed the retiree's individual approach, in my case to the profession of art history and cultural history. [1]

Preparation

I have been teaching for forty-four years, but my intellectual heritage reaches back beyond that. I am one of those whose fundamental inspiration was derived from my own family background.

The Bourdieu-ian "*habitus*" which my parents gave me, without of course realising how determinative it would become, was only strengthened by my school experience. As the only child of cultivated, professional, middle class parents (the Germans would call them "*Bildungsbürger*), music, literature and the fine arts were a natural part of our life. In the Budapest of the 1950s, they also provided a refuge from historical, political and social trauma (**1 PIC**). My father was a distinguished surgeon, a professor of medicine, and my mother was a radiologist. Both parents were sensitive to the need to protect cultural traditions in a hostile external environment, so they started my education in the arts very young, but in a very natural way. This encouragement was so gently and intelligently offered to me, and was wrapped in to so much love and affection, that I never felt the need to react against it.

Father and mother were musical and were well read in the classics of world literature. In such an environment, it was natural that I painlessly acquired a

[1] *This text is the written version for the lecture given 2015 in November at the CEU (Budapest college) The lecture was originally accompanied by a pp slide show*

knowledge of classical music and also read voraciously, extra time for reading being provided by frequent childhood illness. **(PIC)** In addition, regular Sunday visits to the museums were considered a natural way to spend our leisure hours.

From my earliest years I was taken to the Opera, to concerts and, all of this provided a rich and stimulating diet of cultural consumption. Yet we did not see this process as "high", still less "elite" culture; it was simply part of our lives, a way of getting to know things which make life worth living. I also learned to play the piano, which was a great joy -- and I was expected to learn languages (which was somewhat less of a joy.)

We still had a (much reduced) family library at home and my parents allowed me to read what I wanted from it. I very soon graduated from the few children's books we had to adult literature. From the 3rd class in school onwards, my guides to reading were Mihály Babits and Antal Szerb, whose "*History of World Literature*" (**PIC**) I devoured, perhaps rather undiscriminatingly. I chose my readings according to these "guides" in chronological order, so I chewed through a number of Greek and Latin authors (all in Hungarian translations), then Dante and Shakespeare, then the great novelists of the 19th century. By the first year of the secondary school I had reached the 20th century writers. I had no idea at the time that I was absorbing the European classical canon in literature; I was simply fascinated by the stories and by how the literature of the world had unfolded. Of course my concept of "the world" was entirely Eurocentric, since I was growing up at a time when a narrow European perspective was barely questioned.

My experience with music and the visual arts was similar. (**PIC**)The first guides which my father gave me to read, were always textbooks or concise histories of music, of painting and even some books on natural sciences, all of which offered an evolutionary overview of their subject matter. Unconsciously I absorbed a developmental chronology from all these books, together with an awareness of how that worked in an international context, or at least a pan-European one. The importance of chronology and the need to avoid a-historical judgements has remained something of an obsession with me, as some of my past students will know. No doubt I owe this attitude to Clio, the undisputed muse in our home.

With the fine arts it was a bit different. The fascinating black and white images of pictures and statues did not seem to show an unbroken sweep of ever improving aesthetic quality; indeed sometimes the older images seemed to me to be more beautiful than the newer ones. For me, the history of art and sculpture started with the Egyptians and the Greeks, while the aesthetic ideals of Europe were firmly anchored in the Greek idea of mimesis. There were very few coloured illustrations in the books available to me, (**PIC**) so to visit the Szépművészeti Museum or the National Gallery (at that time it was still opposite the Parliament) was always an enormous pleasure. I often felt the images were familiar friends, because the themes of many pictures were the same as the biblical or mythological stories which I had already read, or which my father had explained in detail as we stood before a picture.

However my father died suddenly when I was fourteen and my whole world changed dramatically. Being confronted with the loss of such a beloved parent was traumatic and from that time on a sense of life's transience was always with me. I fear that this frame of mind prevented me from participating in many cheerful, if frivolous, aspects of life, which my peer group enjoyed.

We had to move into a small flat and lived from mother's tiny salary. (Some of our old furniture was parked for years with friends, mainly elderly widowed ladies from my mother's circle of friends, who gave them back decades later, when we were able to get a larger flat) Nevertheless, I was in other respects very fortunate because my secondary school (*Martos Flóra gimnázium*) (**PIC**) had excellent teachers, especially in history. Most importantly, they were prepared to teach outside the rigid requirements of orthodox Marxism. Some of them had previously been university teachers who were now demoted to teach at the secondary school, with a strict Marxist party-member headmistress to keep an eye on them. **(PIC)** However at that time Martos Flóra was a gymnasium for girls only and did not belong to the famous elite secondary schools of the capital. Probably because of this, teachers who had the civil courage to do so could teach more flexibly in this school with its lower profile. All of us liked these teachers, not least because they addressed us formally ("ön" that is, with the Hungarian version of *Sie* in German or *vous* in French), thus creating the courteous illusion that we were already nearly grown up ladies. Everyone in my class, even the least favoured intellectually, became enthusiastic about history **(PIC**), so well

was it taught. There was as a result great solidarity and nobody amongst the students reported on teachers who failed to adhere to the official textbook or the official ideology. I was lucky to get special attention from many of my teachers, but especially from Prof. Zsigmond Ritoók, who lectured on Antiquity, and also from the wonderful history teacher (**PIC**), Dr. Gábor Gyapay. Both lent me books from their own library and encouraged me to enter student competitions.

A major and revelatory experience of my life in these years was that I could travel to Vienna in 1965, when a great-aunt invited me for two weeks in the summer, and I could see the Vienna museums and even visit Salzburg. **(PIC**) The lushness of the *Kunsthistorisches Museum* with its stupendous array of masterpieces dazzled me, and for months afterwards I could speak of nothing else. But my real interest in those years was still music (I had won some competitions and wanted to go to the Music Academy to become a pianist.) Unfortunately I broke a finger playing basket-ball in the gym class when I was seventeen and suddenly the dream of a musical career evaporated. I did not want to be just a music-teacher, indeed at that time I didn't want to be a teacher at all! When I completed secondary school, following my teachers' advice, I applied to the ELTE (the University in Budaest) to study history and English.

At university, this humanist education derived from my family again proved to be an enormous advantage.

(ELTE PIC)

Art History, as it was taught about forty to fifty years ago in Hungary, does not exist any more. It was, I think, the smallest Institute of the ELTE . There were three darkish rooms allotted to it on the first floor in the university building, the former Piarist Gymnasium. Two of them contained the library and the office and working place of the youngest lecturers, (**PIC**) while the third was the seminar-room. The three professors had extra rooms or shared a room, since they attended on different days. **PIC**) The majority of the books were pre-Second World War editions, mainly in foreign languages, but mostly in German.

Art history was a "C" subject, which meant that you could begin to study it only in your second year, and even then only as an extra year **an add-on to your other** two subjects. At the end of that year, the grades you achieved determined whether you could continue with it or not. As a result, very few candidates were

accepted: in my year thirty-six students started, but only six were subsequently accepted for further study. Nevertheless all the six got degrees, and what is more, they almost automatically got jobs, either at Museums or in Institutes.

The most testing course in this preparatory year was the "identification of the works of art." Week by week a test was held whereby one had to correctly identify about fifty art objects in the course of an hour. Old slides were projected, ninety per cent of them black and white images, and you had to be able to identify the master, the period and the style. Principally because of this daunting test, at least half of the students who had opted for art history had usually melted away by December, leaving the field to diehards and masochists like myself. You did indeed need to be very determined and also very confident that art history would in due course become more interesting**.** In that first year we only really encountered the professors at the exam. However in the following years some of the courses became fascinating and all of them – in their individual way disseminated a lot of knowledge. Certainly they were demanding and strict, but if they noticed that you were seriously motivated, they began to help you with all the means at their disposal. Such were Prof Anna Zádor, Prof Lajos Vayer, Prof Nora Aradi and Dozents like Ernő Marosi, Maria Prokop and László Molnár. Professor Vayer, a specialist of early Renaissance art was a clever networker and it was his achievement was to organize the 22nd International Art Congress in Budapest in 1969 which was a break-through in international relations for the profession. (especially for those living behind the iron-curtain)

I particularly want to mention Professor **Anna Zádor** ("Mama" as she was called behind her back.) (**PIC).** She was the Grande Dame of Hungarian art history from the 1950s until her death in 1995 at the age of 94. She was actually an architectural historian, but she became also a historian of gardens and held courses on other topics as well. She gave vivid and enjoyable lectures spiced with humour and subjective remarks. Above all, she showed such a warm-hearted human interest in her most talented or favourite students which none of us who benefited from her patronage and advice will ever forget. **(PIC).** Even after she retired, her beautiful home, stuffed with exquisite *Biedermeier* furniture, fine porcelain, art nouveau vases and thousands of books, was regarded as the "the last salon of Budapest "(a coinage of Ernő Marosi). It was a meeting place of the profession where, over a cup of tea or coffee and home

made pastries you could get advice or information and meet colleagues with similar interests. She was also a genius at networking -- at that time this word was not yet used, but the process existed.

Professor Anna Zádor came from an assimilated Jewish family (again the *Bildungsbürgertum*) and studied not only in Budapest but also in Vienna. She knew personally perhaps more of the great names of art history among her contemporaries abroad than anybody else in Hungary. Widowed early on as a result of losing her husband in the Holocaust, she still lived in part of her old family villa with her sister in law,(**PIC**) who was an interpreter and equally clever and cultivated. They shared an interest and enthusiasm for the arts and culture generally, which they disseminated to their friends and to the new generation of young professionals. Mama, or Anna *néni*, having no family herself, embraced her students as her extended substitute family. From the first moment, I felt at home in her salon-cum-family. She was also extremely Anglophile and two of her close friends were in the English faculty at the university, Kálmán Ruttkay **(PIC**) and Professor László Országh. (**PIC)**

Both were remarkable personalities whose sparkling minds and all-embracing knowledge greatly impressed me. Both of them were gifted lecturers and represented for generations of students an alternative intellectual world from the officially promulgated one. **They epitomised the freedom of spirit and of mind that survives even in a hostile environment**. In point of fact, behind the officially controlled and regulated institutions, there was still a *sub rosa* civil society of the professional world, where a young person could experience an alternative way of thinking and a preservation of humanist values. This semi-hidden professional world was cautious, but retained its civil courage and slowly began to revive its contacts with the "free world" in the west from which it had been cut off in the 1940s. As already mentioned, Anna *néni* was brilliant at networking and at maintaining old friendships and contacts, a flavour of which can be gleaned from reading the interviews she gave, which were published years after her death ("**Enigma"**). Most importantly, she tried to assist her students by establishing contacts for them abroad. These are the kind of contacts that are vital to young scholars starting out on their careers.

I myself have Anna *néni* to thank that I met the great Sir Ernst Gombrich in **(PIC)** London. They had studied together in a Julius Schlosser seminar in Vienna and they revived their contact from the sixties on, when it again became possible to correspond with friends in non-Communist states. Anybody who has ever attended a course on art history knows the name of Ernst Gombrich, who wrote the most influential general history of art, **(PIC**) first published in 1950, which is still the unrivalled bestseller of the profession. It has been translated into thirty-nine languages and sold ca. 8 million copies worldwide. More to the point, it established the canon in western art, one that was more or less unchallenged from the nineteen-fifties to the mid nineteen-eighties. Some would say that this canon remains substantially intact, although it has certainly been disputed, firstly by feminist art history, and then by diverse other claims and methodologies within the history of art. Notwithstanding all that, it is Gombrich´s "*Art and Illusion*" and his Renaissance studies which the art historians regard as his greatest contribution to the profession. **(PIC)** Both *The Story of Art* and *Art and Illusion* were translated in the years when I studied at the university. In a way, they heralded a new, more open phase of Hungarian cultural policies (or rather publishing practice, when important works of the "western world" were translated, despite not being written in the spirit of Marxism.) And this despite the fact that one of Gombrich's closest friends was known to be the philosopher Karl Popper, at that time an absolute *bête noire* of Communist ideologues.

It was also a new phenomenon that one could travel to "the west" with seventy dollars as pocket money each third, or later each second, year. I tried to exploit this possibility as often as possible. It was on one of these trips in 1975 that I met Gombrich when he was still the Director of the Warburg Institute in London. He invited me to his house for lunch and I was "examined" in a kindly way, and evidently passed the test, because subsequently I could visit him any time when travelling to London. Naturally he became for me an ideal of how to write on art with profundity and elegance, with great scholarship **but without the jargon or pretentiousness** that sadly disfigures too much of the contemporary art discourse. I loved the fact that, as a great scholar of the Renaissance, he never despised the task of popularisation, feeling that scholars have a duty to the broader public and should do everything necessary to make knowledge about the arts accessible. This attitude he shared with the greatest of the profession, who have always tried to disseminate knowledge with grace and style, rather

than lock themselves up in an ivory tower of narrow and somewhat snobbish professionalism.

When I finished studying at the university, I wrote my Diploma work in English to Professor László Országh on a subject which was partly of art historical interest, namely *The Influence of Ruskin in Hungary*. I got a first with this work, but it was never published.

II.
The Institute for History of Art at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

My first working place, where I worked for ten years, was on the Buda Castle Hill in a small and graceful palace, which is now once again the Residence of the Archbishop of Hungary, as it had been before Communism. (**PIC)** At that time, there were about fifteen art historians working there, and one of their major tasks was to compile the *Handbook of Art in Hungary*. All academic institutes were theoretically obliged to fulfil a similar task of resource creation, and some of them, for example ours, actually did so! The Director of the Institute was Nóra Aradi, a specialist of 20th century painting, where her main field was Socialist Realism and Marxist Aesthetics. (**PIC)** There were excellent medievalists, for example Éva Kovács (**PIC**) and Ernő Marosi **(PIC**) who became the Vice-Director. The Renaissance specialist was Feuerné Tóth Rózsa, (PIC), the Baroque specialist Géza Galavics, (PIC) and the specialist for Applied Art (mainly furniture) was Hedvig Szabolcsi. (PIC) László Beke was a kind of "enfant terrible" the specialist of contemporary art and daringly modern theorist of the neo-avant-garde, the Bete noir of the party authorities.

The scholar who worked out the concept for the pioneering volume of *Art in Hungary between 1890-1919*, was Lajos Németh **(PIC**). He was both a prolific art historian and a moral authority for the rest of us. He worked closely with the brilliant stylist Mária Bernáth, herself the daughter of the distinguished painter Aurel Bernáth, and a specialist of the famous Art Nouveau painter József Rippl-Rónai. I was chosen to be the assistant to the team making the handbook, which involved a lot of practical work, not to say drudgery; but first and foremost it was my task to control the database of the relevant texts.

Lajos Német's ambition was to revolutionise the methodology of art history for the handbook and to this end numerous interdisciplinary discussions were held where the leading scholars in the other disciplines of the humanities -- archaeologists, ethnographers and historians took part The most important

innovation was that sociological aspects of art should also be integrated into the handbook, together with different aspects of folk art and popular culture. **(PIC**) Published in 1981, the handbook was indeed a great achievement in its day, consisting of two volumes, (more than 1500black/white illustrations. No other epoch of art in Hungary had previously been written up in such depth and at such length. Only two other volumes in this series were to be published (the period between the two World Wars in 1985, and that of the Late Middle Ages in1987.)

In the 1990's, the methodology and discourses of art history changed radically, but anyway the money to finance such projects had run out. Only recently has the Institute of Art History reverted to publishing this type of valuable sourcebook, although the approach is now different and the text now includes, for example, vital aspects of patronage plus many more illustrations.

At the Institute I learned a great deal from my colleagues and I look back with nostalgia on the friendly and stimulating atmosphere of those years. The discussions that we had amongst the editorial team amounted to a post-graduate course in art history (and indeed in academic life). Hugely stimulating were the lunches in the common dining hall, or Menza [Mensa], that were available for all those working in the academic institutes situated on the Buda (Castle Hill) Várhegy. At these one could simply listen to learned colleagues, or participate in the heated debates on topical issues which were stimulating enough to enable one to overlook the tasteless institutional food. To mention only a few who made these lunches such a pleasure: Tamás Hófer, the ethnologist, and Péter Hanák, György Litván, György Ránki and Tibor Hajdú among the historians, all of whom sensed by the 1980s that a new political wind was blowing, or indeed contributed to its force.

When the bulky handbook was complete, Lajos Németh moved to the University as head of the Art History department, and Hedvig Szabolcsi (**PIC**) (a friend of Anna Zádor and, like her, an anglophile) became my immediate boss in the Institute. She was always very kind and helpful to me. She had an immense cultural knowledge, loved classical music, and carried all her knowledge with ease and grace. An elegant and warm-hearted Grande Dame of high culture. In many respects she became a model for me. I can thank her that I was introduced

to the usually neglected world of the applied arts, and though I had loved old furniture since my childhood, the way she analyzed the stylistic periods and reconstructed *interieurs* opened up a new field of interest for me. I had by now also developed an intense interest in architecture and managed to write a few studies in this field that were intended as parts of the forthcoming Handbook. Researching these essays on the *interieurs* of villas and family houses, or on the coffee-houses of Budapest, led me almost accidentally into the field of cultural history, which was just becoming fashionable in western scholarship.

For the handbook, I was obliged to specialize on art around 1900, which implied a focus on the cultural history of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1981, I was granted a three months scholarship to Vienna to do research on the stylistic connections between Hungarian and Austrian art, particularly the applied arts and architecture. These three months proved to be decisive also in my professional career. It was the year when Carl E. Schorske´s book *Fin de Siècle Vienna* was published and I first picked it up in a bookshop on the Graben (now sadly defunct, like so many bookshops). I devoured the contents in a few days and the text was a revelation to me. Suddenly I looked at the city with an entirely different eye. I had always loved it, but not because of the Secession: rather for the music, the opera, the atmosphere of the Biedermeier flat of my great aunt, the lushness of the Baroque and Historicist palaces. Now, I had discovered somebody who could offer an explanation for the unique accumulation of aesthetic masterpieces in each artistic field. Moreover the explanation was, fascinatingly, both political and psychological, as well as aesthetic. . It took a cultural historian with an amazingly broad education and armed with knowledge of a literary historian, an art historian and a musicologist, not to mention a capacity for acute political analysis, to discover, that behind the intricate network of the different branches of the arts, lay a rare constellation of rich artistic creativity; and that this creativity was the fruit of a crisis, of the deep disillusionment with liberalism that characterized Vienna in the 1890s.

In his series of essays Schorske describes several branches of Viennese high culture -- architecture, painting, literature; nevertheless his central hero is Sigmund Freud. All the sister arts reflected in one way or another that strong interest in the psyche and in the world of the instincts which changed our European perception of man, and heralded the unruly, tortured and self-

tormenting modernity of the 20th century, full, as it was, with doubts about the reality of progress and anxiously questioning the ideals of the Enlightenment.

Beside the Parisian another type of modernity was born in Vienna.

The nascence of this new intellectual paradigm was described in prose that rises to the level of a virtuoso writer.

The following spring Carl Schorske was a guest lecturer at the Institute of History back in Budapest, and I was permitted to attend his talk (although not a member of that Institute) on the strict condition that I did not intervene in the conference. In the event I did manage to explain to Schorske that I had reservations about his analyses of Klimt´s notorious faculty pictures, on the grounds that he tended to over-emphasise the Freudian interpretation of them that had been somewhat forced into this discussion. My historian colleagues were aghast at this act of *lèse majesté*, but Schorske was not in the least offended and pressed me to explain what I meant in greater detail. This proved to be the beginning of a long and wonderful friendship.

It is commonly agreed that Carl Schorske´s way of writing cultural history (and art history which, at its best, is cultural history) brought something radically new into the field. In particular, his analysis of the crisis of the liberal ego in Wien in terms of the rebellion of the wealthy sons and daughters of the liberal bourgeois who had created the Founder's Period (*Gründerzeit*) and its materialist culture, was a pioneering work of scholarship. Schorske described what amounted to an earthquake in Viennese culture, whereby sensitive minds in whatever creative genre struggled to find new ways of expressing the traumas of the human soul. And these struggles were, in short, the birth pangs of what came to be known as "modernity" and "modernism." I would contend today, as I felt when I first read Schorske's book, that this remains a valid and true perception, both historically and psychologically. Subsequent writers have of course offered other explanations, but the Schorske-ian image of Vienna at that time has proved remarkably resilient.

Those who looked at other cities using a Schorskeian lens, (for example, at Basel, or Prague, or Budapest) were keen in their search to find a binding metaphor to

describe a local cultural milieu. Yet, despite the virtues of these often fascinating studies, few, if any, have succeeded in offering such an all-embracing descriptive metaphor. Peter Hanák paraphrased for Budapest The Garden and the Workshop (*Kert és műhely*) May be cities are too individual, and each suggests its own methodology or metaphor. At any rate it seems hard to find any examples of cities where the arts were as much appreciated, indeed so vividly experienced, and by such a wide layer of the population, as was then the case in Vienna.

Numerous different methodologies and discourses have been mobilized in the last thirty years to write up the cultural history of the Austro-Hungarian Empire -- indeed it has become an academic industry. The first wave of these, following Schorske's discoveries, began in 1985 with the blockbuster exhibition "*Traum und Wirklichkeit*." This, one of the first of the new type of mega-shows, kick-started the marketing of the "Golden Age of Vienna," being inevitably associated with the glittering, golden backgrounds to Klimt's most famous pictures. Very quickly Klimt and the Secession became big money-spinners for the city's international tourism.

Having lived in Vienna since the autumn of 1984, I have witnessed at close quarters the intellectual construction and marketing of Vienna as the cradle of Modernism. The heritage of the decaying Empire was relatively neglected, notwithstanding its aesthetic achievements, and the gospel of Modernism carried all before it. Although Vienna had always retained its status as a world centre of music, it had languished politically on the margins of the Western world. Now it became, almost overnight, a Mecca for cultural pilgrims, partly because of the influence of Freud, but more and more because of Klimt and the Secession.

If the Secessionist works had not indeed been enchantingly beautiful and idiosyncratic masterpieces, such a process would not have been possible. Yet, to a very significant extent, it was Schorske who provided the impetus for this massive interest in them, which was then nurtured by a slew of pioneering exhibitions, not to mention extensive new scholarly input. Underlining the influence of this one scholar is, ironically, the fact that the great Ernst Gombrich did not originally include Gustav Klimt in his bestselling *History of Art*, even

though he was himself Viennese, moreover a Klimt drawing hung in his London living room! He did include Oscar Kokoschka, who was a personal friend, but not Egon Schiele. This was not because he did not think that Klimt and Schiele were good artists, but they did not seem to be important enough for him in a global perspective. For him they were artists who only meant something to the narrow circle of the Viennese elite. Now of course their global reach is demonstrated by the millions of dollars their works fetch at auction. [PICTURES] The effect on Vienna, it need hardly be said, has been not only to raise tourist revenues exponentially, but also to make it one of the most fashionable cities of the world. No wonder, then, that in 2013 the City of Vienna awarded Viennese Citizenship to a now very aged Professor Schorske, the Mayor thanking him in his *laudatio* for "putting Vienna back onto the cultural map of Europe" (he meant, of course, that a city hitherto all too often associated with Hitler was now more often associated with Freud, Klimt and Schiele.)

In 1985, I wrote a short book on Gustav Klimt, chiefly out of enthusiasm for the fascinating and complex symbolism of his works. It was hideously difficult to get permission for the illustrations, since neither the Vienna Museums, nor the Galerie Welz (who owned the reproduction rights to almost all the Klimt works) were keen to give it for a book being written by an unknown foreigner. However in the end it came good and the book appeared in several languages, including Hungarian. Shortly after it, I did a book on Austrian painting, encountering similar difficulties, so that it was again three years before it appeared. These difficulties may seem trivial to an outsider, but one has to feel sympathy for young art historians starting out today who face often rapacious demands for reproduction fees, yet must pay them to secure an audience for their work, and in any case must continue to publish for the sake of their career. A further difficulty that I had at that time was that I still I carried a so-called consular passport which, being issued by the Hugarian authorities, did not allow me to work in Austria. I am eternally grateful to the Austrian historian Moritz Csáky whose recommendation (together with two other Austrian Professors) helped me to acquire Austrian citizenship in late 1989.

The issue of Klimt raises a topic which has fascinated me for the last twenty-five years of my scholarly life, namely the question of the artistic canon. This concept is still around, although perhaps now only subliminally, since numerous modern

discourses in cultural history have challenged its existing form, usually from an ideological point of view such as feminism. Budapest born, but living abroad (in Vienna and sporadically in England), I was continually confronted with the uncomfortable realisation that Hungary and Hungarian art was (and is still) not on the mental map of foreigners, however well informed or cultivated they might be. Indeed I once secured an entrée to a very well known British publisher in the hope of securing a book commission for a project I had in mind. When I said to him that I had an idea for a book on Hungarian painting, he looked at me quizzically and asked sardonically "*Is there any*?" Thereafter it became something of a mission of mine to make the very real achievements of Hungarian painting known beyond the borders of Hungary.

However it has often seemed to me that Hungary's leading institutions could have done more to organize significant exhibitions abroad when this became politically possible after 1990. After 1984, Vienna took the Viennese Secession and Austrian Expressionism round the world at least twice: from New York to Tokyo there are few capitals where the Klimts have not been shown!

Back in Vienna, there wasn´t much interest in Hungarian art. By contrast, immediately following 1989, special exhibitions were organized by the Czechs on Czech *art nouveau,* and a number of books were published on Czech history and culture. Hungary however faded from the focus of the Austrian historians when the political incentive was no longer there, even more so after Austria joined the EU in 1993. This shift of interest to the Czechs may partly be attributed to the long history of German culture in Prague under the Habsburg Empire, which made the Czech past more interesting to a German-speaking audience (and of course the freshly opened archives in Prague were also an enticing prospect). Even the Poles profited more from the renewed cultural and political contacts: Cracow and Galicia became a favourite field of scholarly re-evaluation of the past. There was one exception to the indifference towards the Hungarians, namely a substantial exhibition in 2003 initiated by Professor Károly Csuri, the then Director of the Collegium Hungaricum, and organized between the Kunsthistorisches Museum and the Budapest Törteneti Múzeum.

When I was selecting from among those works and authors which have impressed me most in my field, I realized that they were mostly books which offered some new type of synthesis, or a new approach to an old topic. Amongst such works are those of Ernst Gombrich and Carl E. Schorske´s *Fin de Sièecle Vienna*, already mentioned, Werner Hofmann´s *The Earthly Paradise*, Francis Haskill's *History and its Images* and finally a book which is not art history, but nevertheless has meant a great deal to me. This is Csikszentmíhályi´s *Flow*, a brilliant discourse concerning the roots of creativity-- and how each of us can nurture it in ourselves.

Since I was lucky enough to get to know Professors Gombrich and Schorske in person, I would like to recall my experience of them in a way which may perhaps illumine something of their personalities – although the two could not have been more different. They knew each other quite well, but were chalk and cheese in their approach to scholarship, and indeed life.

Gombrich (the older man) was very strict, occasionally very sharp in his speech and sometimes merciless in his irony. Only the best was good enough for him. For decades his "*Story of Art,*" originally written with teenagers in mind, had fixed the western canon -- indeed I don't think it would be an exaggeration to say that the Gombrich canon was more or less universally accepted. Naturally, when he first published it in 1950, because he was not a specialist of 20th century art, he had to rely on contemporary professional literature for the part devoted to the 20th century, which was anyway extremely selective.

In 1966, Gombrich extended the "*Story*" up to the present, albeit somewhat reluctantly: The new chapter was entitled "A Story without End: The triumph of Modernism." With the fifth revision, an enlargement of the original text written 40 years earlier (this was the 15th edition), Gombrich confronted what he called "An altered mood," actually Post-modernism, and reminded readers of his previous remark that the taste of each generation strives to differ from the preceding one. His enthusiasm for the recent developments in art was, shall we say, not unconstrained.

In 1993, Gombrich was invited to the Prague branch of the CEU where for a few years art history was taught as a separate subject. He gave three lectures and took the opportunity to enjoy the city with his wife. It transpired that it was in Prague that they had spent the three days of honeymoon in 1929. As his rather stoical wife Ilse explained to us, he told her already before the wedding that he didn't have much time for fripperies like honeymoons – he had work to do, after all. So on this trip they perhaps caught up with some of the things he was too busy to see on their first visit….

One morning the enthusiastic and very patriotic local professor of art history burst in upon the Gombrichs as they ate their breakfast and entered upon a breathless eulogy of a sensational exhibition of the Czech cubist painter Bohumil Kubista, currently running in Prague, which Gombrich was on no account to miss. On and on he went, as Gombrich sipped his coffee pensively. At length the voluble professor ground to halt, having run out of superlatives, and Gombrich raised his face, so uncannily reminiscent of the dog that used to appear in advertisements for Hush Puppy shoes, and said rather firmly: "*Yeth, I would like to know about Kubithta, BUT NOT TOO MUCH*."

Actually this trivial story, funny in its way, could be taken as emblematic of the problem about the canon I mentioned earlier. How is it possible, that Central European art, practically from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, was excluded from the internationally acknowledged European Canon? What lies behind this and can it be corrected? How would one set about integrating at least the greatest Central European masters into it?

A clue as to how the mechanism of such a correction might function may be provided by the (virtually single-handed) achievement of Carl Schorske, the scholar who has put turn of the century Vienna back onto the cultural map of Europe. As a result of his work we have been reminded of what many had forgotten or never knew, namely that Vienna was formerly one of the great cultural hubs of the civilised world, the home of medical discovery, Freudian psychological insights, philosophers of the first rank, as well as all the musicians, composers, writers and, yes, painters too numerous to mention. It took a cultural historian with an amazingly broad education and armed with knowledge

of a literary historian, an art historian and a musicologist, not to mention a capacity for acute political analysis, to discover, that behind the intricate network of the different branches of the arts, lay a rare constellation of rich artistic creativity; and that this creativity was the fruit of a crisis, of the deep disillusionment with liberalism that characterized Vienna in the 1890s. In the 1980s this was a sensitive issue, and the tradition of European high culture was still highly appreciated.

In his series of essays Schorske describes several branches of Viennese high culture -- architecture, painting, literature; nevertheless his central hero is Sigmund Freud. All the sister arts reflected in one way or another that strong interest in the psyche and in the world of the instincts which changed our European perception of man, and heralded the unruly, tortured and self-tormenting modernity of the 20th century, full, as it was, with doubts about the reality of progress and anxiously questioning the ideals of the Enlightenment.

The nascence of this new intellectual paradigm was described by Schorske in prose that rises to the level of a virtuoso writer. The later socio-historical approach to Viennese society, focusing on mass culture (e.g. Maderthaner) or on the issue of nationalism, does add new observations to the whole tableau but does not replace the Schorskeian image of Viennese high culture.

With his nuanced aesthetic analyses Schorske did succeed in putting Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele and Oscar Kokoschka into the International European Canon. – No wonder he was made an honorary citizen of Vienna.

But my own debt to him is a very personal one. Each time we met, I was reminded that the secret of a charismatic lecturer is not only that he or she has a great fund of knowledge and is capable of imparting it in a sophisticated way, but such a person must also have a passionate love and enthusiasm for his or her subject which inspires others to the share the sensual and spiritual joys of the aesthetic experience their teacher has unlocked.

Schorske´s method of analysing the high culture of a city in fact established a school among cultural historians. In Hungary Peter Hanák, the first chair of this

History Department, was his closest and most successful follower. Hanák in his "*Workshop and the Garden*" tried to offer a parallel to the Schorskeain "garden" metaphor for Vienna. Like Schorske, he was a charismatic teacher and a remarkable historian, although his book did not achieve the same resonance as Schorske's. Perhaps that was again partly because Budapest, and Hungarian culture generally, were not considered interesting enough to the international community of cultural historians.

Turning from the broader field of cultural history to my narrower field of art history and the international canon, I find myself asking some worrying questions. What happened in the historical evaluation of Central- European art after the fall of the iron curtain? Was there a realistic chance that Budapest might catch up with successful Vienna in this respect? Could indeed any of the Central European countries and nations be re-evaluated as integral parts of the common European culture in 1900?

There is no time to go into details but my subjective answer is: I doubt it. The region was interesting for western scholarship in the first four or five years after the change; it opened up a new field, a methodologically "untouched" region and supplied a database for case studies on nationalism, on institutional transition, on micro-history and various other different methods and discourses which the cultural turn offered. Yet "intellectual export" of the region's cultural heritage, the familiarisation elsewhere with its cultural products (including the fine arts of the region) was limited and its promotion lacked a strategic concept.

However, after its countries joined the EU, the sub-region of Central Europe to a large extent melted from the minds and hearts of scholarship, even of cultural history.

III.
Vienna and Budapest

In the 1990s I was a member of a research group which focused on Viennese culture around 1900. I wrote several studies on the architecture of Historicism, on Art Nouveau/Jugendstil[2] and was one of the first to focus on provincial cities, pointing out the importance of city-mayors in the modernization process.[3] The construction of local identities was inspired by these studies. I was also among the first to analyse the particular role of Jewish Patronage in promoting the *Magyar stílus* (the secessionist Hungarian style, sometimes known as the Hungarian National Style).[4] In those years (the 1990s) regional comparison of painting became my main interest. Apart from stylistic issues,[5] what interested me most was a comparison of the social background and politico-philosophical orientation of the various art groupings, which was reflected not only in the choice of subject matter,[6] or in the choice of style, but also in the way networking functioned within a specific cultural field.[7]

One of my main aims was to elucidate out the similarities and differences between the artists of the different nations of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as

[2] ISP: Nationale und übernationale Kunstströmungen in der Habsburg Monarchie. – Lectures Published by the Institute for Art History , Salzburg 1989 pp 7-15.
[3] Study on The Provincial City Halls in Hungary – (German)
The Role of City Majors--- The Conditions of modernization of provincial cities … 1993..
[4] ISP: Jewish art patronage in Budapest at the Turn of the Century in: History Department Yearbook 1994-95 CEU p 113-131
[5] ISP: Die Einfluss der französischen Postimpressionisten in Wien und Budapest in: Mitteilungen der Österreichischen Galerie 1990/91. Pp 61-101.
[6] The Image of the City in Central European Painting at the Turn of the century
[7] ISP Reform der Bühnenkunst in Ungarn um die Jahrhundertwende (Reform of Stage Design in Hungary at the Turn of the Century) in Musiktheater, Böhlau, Vienna 1990. Pp 41-51.

revealed in their paintings. How did they react to the common intellectual and spiritual crisis of the age, and how did local traditions affect their individual solutions to aesthetic problems. For example,*how did they handle Gender issues or the Eros and Thanatos theme?[8] What were the obstacles in the early path of modernity in the differing cultural environments (e.g. in Budapest), and why did these environments show different trajectories of development?

*My final overview of these issues appears in the forthcoming ( ) aforementioned Handbook on the painting of the Austro/Hungarian Empire during the Age of Franz Joseph.

The cultural turn and its methods reformulated a number of old questions in art history. The narrower fields of feminist art history and analytical social history involving a close reading of arcane sources also brought fresh insights to mainstream history of art, but it was still focusing almost exclusively on Paris-centred Western European main stream publications. In Central Europe, the task of mapping the artistic heritage of its constituent countries, which could not have been done earlier due to political constraints, now needed to be done. It now progresses among much more benign research circumstances and also because professionals can travel more easily and study abroad. This has speeded up the scholarly exchange between the previously divided halves of Europe. Western academe having discovered a new field for case studies in this region, it was inevitable also that it should export new methodology. This has assisted the integration of the Hungarian cultural heritage of the last 150 years into the broader European context. Previously, because the Hungarian sources remained an obstacle for foreign scholars, Vienna had the advantage; German is easier to

[8] He Image of Women in Painting in the Austro-Hungarian Empire

learn than Hungarian and besides the great imperial city was more fascinating than the cultural heritage of a national capital, at least in regard to the quantity of art works that could be studied. Fin -de -siècle Budapest found it hard to rival the city of Freud and Klimt, which had benefited from the revenues of a seven hundred year old empire. The visibility of a whole oeuvre is always a *sine qua non* for establishing the place of any artist in the local and in the international canon. Without well researched historic retrospectives, no master and no age can be "discovered" – or indeed rediscovered. (The monographs and monographic retrospectives were rare occasions in the Hungarian museum practice.[9])

It is not only the academic world that can influence the fashion of topical issues, but the exhibition policy of museums. Blockbuster exhibitions influence not only the general public, but also the powerful media, which have the ability to construct a new discourse and to popularize an artist as a cultural hero.

The issue of the Central European canon has remained with me. By writing on the important Hungarian painters of the *fin-de-siècle*, I have tried to call the attention of the English speaking world to their aesthetic achievement. In addition, in recent decades, I have focused in my research on a number of issues which were earlier neglected by the art historians – for example, patronage, artistic networks and especially the influence of the press.

Art criticism is a field which for long was of marginal interest to mainstream art history. The exceptions to this were the Parisian critics of Impressionism and a

[9] There were a few on the great masters of the turn of the Century around 1900, (Rippl-Rónai, Mednyánszky, Ferenczy, Vaszary, Csontváry), but they were not exhibited outside Hungary.

few critics who were always in limelight because they were famous writers (e.g. Baudelaire and Zola). Otherwise there are still very few individual monographs dedicated to a specific art critic. – Even in England, the only figure to receive such treatment is John Ruskin. - However in recent years the Hungarian scholar Àrpád Timár has embarked on collecting art criticism from the Hungarian daily press and his pioneering volumes have changed not only the "reception" history of single artists and movements, but have illuminated the wider field of culture generally.[10]

There are no such collections of art criticism about Vienna and Viennese art life.

I myself embarked on writing a monograph on the art critic Ludwig Hevesi ***PIC.** As well as writing several studies on him, I organized a Hevesi conference in Vienna in 2013 and edited the contributions of this conference for a study volume. The final fruit of this research will be a monograph on Ludwig Hevesi, which will be published in Vienna in German and (hopefully) also in Hungarian.

Hevesi was of Hungarian Jewish origin, studied medicine in Vienna, but decided to become a *feuilletonist* (that is, the writer of newspaper commentaries) at first in Budapest at the *Pester Lloyd*, then from 1875 in Vienna where he became the most important theatre and art critic. Throughout his long career he wrote more than a thousand of articles (as well as short stories and even novels). He was exceptionally open minded and had crucial role in helping the artistic breakthrough of the Secession in fact he formulated the Secession's motto, which was engraved on the façade of the Secession exhibition hall. He also

[10] Timár Árpád (eds. „Az utak elváltak 1-4., 2009-2019)

defended passionately the Gustav Klimt's most daring experiments during the crucial debates on the controversial paintings for the faculty atria of the Vienna University . (PIC) In my book I will analyse the whole landscape of the Viennese cultural press, in particular the art criticism of some other main protagonists (e.g. Karl Kraus or A. Franz Seligman), who argued against Hevesi and against Klimt´s pessimistic artistic vision.

The relationship between teaching and research:

There has always been an intricate relationship between the two and my research interest has benefited from my teaching activities. Teaching is a joy, at least for me, because it affords the possibility of transmitting, but equally receiving, ideas. Well known facts and assumptions always benefit from a new approach or methodology. For the last ten years I was, on paper, giving the same course entitled *Art and Politics or Art and Modernity*, but in reality the course differed from year to year.

It has, however, to be admitted, that the basic knowledge of most of my students about the visual arts, was very limited. I was obliged to squeeze into a nutshell two thousand years of art history, before embarking on the details of 19th and 20th century art.

The medial and the social context of the arts has changed so much in the last 25 years, that the place of the visual arts in our society has undergone a paradigmatic change. At first there was the easy availability of all images on the internet. Soon, however, there was rapid commodification and artistic productions became largely subject to capitalist market forces. The art tyro is confronted with an unstructured and chaotic avalanche of visual images.

What a teacher notices is that the internet has largely eradicated the capacity for retaining the visual memory of images.

An important aspect, which I want to stress and perhaps to leave as a legacy to younger colleagues teaching art history, is the importance of chronology.

Although at first glance that sounds old-fashioned and boring, it should remain a vital principle for anyone teaching or learning art history. In an age when the virtual world of the visual medias cannibalise all the visual product of the world (past and present) and mix it into a dense chaos, the young generations are faced with a virtual visual environment from which the dimension of time, that is, of chronology, has disappeared. As a result of the `'disappearance`' of the past, the possibility of a genuine social and political contextualization of the images has also disappeared.

For example: a considerable number of CEU students (who are in a way a privileged elite, all with masters degrees) were unable to identify the emblematic detail, the hands of God and Adam from Michelangelo´s "*Creation of Adam*" from the Sixtine chapel (neither the subject nor the style -- and they mostly placed it in the 20th century). They remembered vaguely that it was a part of an advertisement for a humanitarian charity or some such.... The net had cannibalized the historic image and deprived them of their context, dissolving the chronology of the visual heritage of human cultures. Students cannot differentiate between works of the Renaissance and the 20th century, and cannot tell if an image was created before or after the Holocaust.

To me art history is a historic discipline and in spite of the permanent paradigmatic changes at the cutting edge of the mainstream university

workshops, it has to adhere to its basic coordinate system of the chronological principle and transmit it both in education and in the museums (at least in the permanent collections). In real life we are embedded in a flow of time and our duty as intellectuals, teachers is to transmit this perception to the next generation, otherwise we are, I believe, betraying our calling as teachers.

This is why general introductory courses are important and have a place in the CEU's curriculum. Usually at the end of each of my courses I send my students away with the advice: never miss out a visit to a museum or an art gallery -- but decide yourself what you like. Everybody has the right to have an individual taste, but that taste is better formed and more rewarding if you know about other things too.

Beside chronological narrative and social contextualization, my main aim as a teacher has been to transmit to students that art is, in spite of its pluralistic and various other functions, also for enjoyment. I still believe what my parents instinctively believed, what Gombrich and Schorske taught me, namely that knowledge of art enriches life. If you know how to absorb the knowledge of it, it will help you overcome many a crisis in life, even to face illness, old age and transience with greater equanimity. In short, it helps you to live, and perhaps also to die, better than might otherwise be the case.