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A selection of titles

Italy

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Vilmos Csaplár

HITLER'S DAUGHTER

Novel (Kalligram), 2009, 288 pages

„The toad is a degenerate frog – said Hitler, turning back from the door of the Pumpkin Soup – Who knows what it eats. Certainly something it doesn't fancy at all.”

The author has opted for a provocative title for his latest novel – the sort of title that has one do a double-take. Unrolling a plot with several strands that becomes ever more intricate, the book takes advantage of the freedom and spontaneity of fiction to make the factual basis and reality of the history of the twentieth century even more radical. That is a dangerous, risky game – positively serious. Csaplár is well aware of that. His omniscient narrator is low-key and cool, yet determined, otherwise how are we supposed to believe that a young political radical at the very start of his career and who paints, not corny still lifes, but dreadful historical visions, would father a child by Fanny Kucor, a kitchen maid in a Hungarian eating-house in Munich, and Jewish to boot.

The narrator unexpectedly pops up at the most diverse places in Europe and Hungary's history. One can sense in the finest of the episodes Csaplár's experience with writing film scripts: he has a remarkable talent for putting things over in visual terms, providing copious descriptions, giving his characters vivid vernacular, and making quick, well-judged changes of pace. The historical kaleidoscope does not omit Hungary's winter of 1944, portraying the siege of Budapest and the Calvary that most of its inhabitants underwent from a worm's eye view. It goes into the dilemma faced by the capital's Jews in quite some detail. What is the best thing to do when it is already clear what they can expect, and they try to prepare themselves for it? Is it worth negotiating with the Nazis, or even possible? Can a secret deal be struck to buy human lives for gold? The narrator's calm and collected approach, with its occasional darts of acerbic irony, is particularly important in these parts. So too when it comes to scenes from Hungary's 1956 revolution.

The sources that the author carefully incorporates into the novel are likewise highly relevant, precisely to lend truth to the fiction. Hitler's Daughter is a family saga that is made up of shards, splinters of fate, in order to be able to give a sense of the carnivalesque colours of the terrible history of the last century.

CSAPLÁR VILMOS

Hitler
lánya

KALLIGRAM



112-page sample translation in German available

AEGON Literary Prize 2010

PRAISE FOR THE NOVEL

„Vilmos Csaplár’s novel, built on historical documents, legends and fairytale-like grotesque fiction is not only worthy of the German audience’s and publishers’ attention because of it’s core subject, hogy Hungarian Holocaust, but more importantly because of it’s exceptional and unique point of view on history. The book Hitler’s Daughter as reading material works as a pamphlet against all forms of racism and racial theory, like a genetic compendium, which makes a clear distinction between the roles of the victim and the wrongdoer, but at the same time, through it’s tightly woven texture, also illuminates the circumstances and unwanted changes of role that made the twentieth century so tragic. The German reader with this book can have a look at his or her own history through the fate of Hungarian characters, in a Hungarian scenery. Common history is not the subject, but the very material of Csaplár’s novel, the context of existence which is devoid of any spatial or national specificity.”

Péter Nádas, author of *A Book of Memories* and *Parallel Stories*

„There is something utterly confusing in this novel. In this story (or rather stories). Vilmos Csaplár is telling the story of this extremely dreadful era – where one couldn’t survive in a »moral« way (unless one became a victim, for ever, before being able to do anything, right or wrong) in a so colourful, so witty way and at the same time filled with so much cold seriousness (no cheap jokes), that despite of the always-hidden narrator’s impassible voice and register, this sad, upsetting, sometimes gut-wrenching story still becomes somewhat loveable in the end.”

György Szerbhorváth, *Litera.hu*

„The scene where the title’s Hitler has his violent way with Fanni can be read as a prototype or a satirical focus point of all violent acts in the novel. And from this point of view, the title Hitler’s Daughter can be understood metaphorically: since if not in a biological way, but in a lot of other ways – for example as the perpetrators or victims of smaller or bigger violent acts – everybody (every character, and maybe even the reader) becomes an unwilling descendant of the legendary violators and / or victims of world history.”

Sándor Bazsányi, *Kalligram Review*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vilmos Csaplár was born in 1947. He is a writer, screenwriter and current president of the Belletrist Association, one of the most important associations of acclaimed Hungarian writers. He is the author of twelve novels, a number of short stories, seven film scripts and has been the editor of several important anthologies and reviews of the past decades.





Dávid Barna

A HUNGARIAN NOVEL

Novel (Libri), 2011, 176 pages

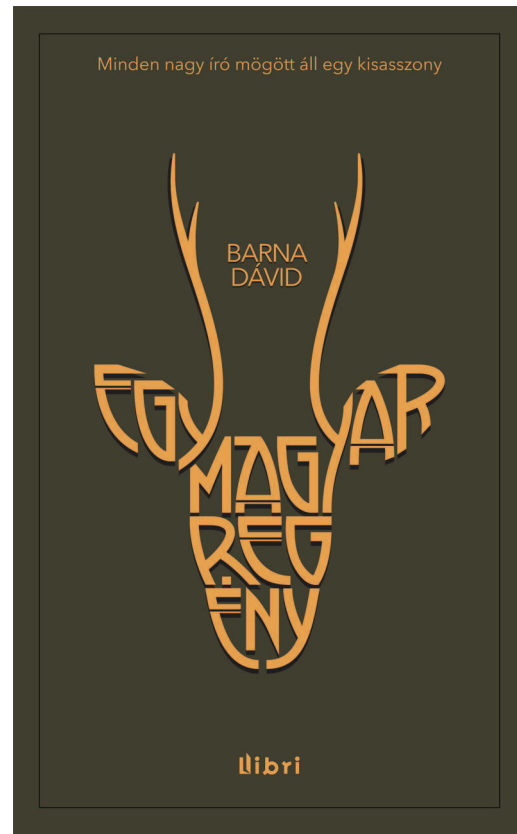
Publication: 2011. 09. 26.

“A man cannot touch a woman and go unpunished.”

It is a windy, cold September night in 1936 when a well-off gentleman, unable to sleep, crosses the Franz Josef Bridge in Budapest, finding a twenty-something girl there stubbornly staring the river with grim thoughts in her head. They start talking, and

finish the night in a shabby little hotel from where the older gentleman swiftly disappears before the break of dawn, going back to his wife and family, and leaving a note for the girl to arrange another rendez-vous for the following day. But what if these two already knew each other, from another one-night-stand one and a half year ago? And what if from that first encounter, a little boy was born, now living in the countryside with foster parents, his mother not being able to support him? And what if the elderly gentleman, finding his youthful vigor and lust for life reanimated by the girl younger than his adult daughters, is in fact the great Hungarian writer Zsigmond Móricz (1879-1942), the pride of the nation, the favourite of elegant salons and one of the brightest stars of literary life?

The stunning debut novel of Dávid Barna tells the story of this unconventional relationship, leading the reader through the different stages of a passionate and uneasy liaison with uncompromising frankness from their first – or second – night through their more-or-less established life together in the writer’s country house until the illness and death of the great man. Móricz introduces Kati to the world as his foster daughter, and after his separation from his second wife, a famous actress,





takes her to his house officially as a housekeeper. He visits his illegitimate son regularly, and later brings him over too in order to ensure his education. But when Móricz falls ill and dies after some dreary and heart-rending days of agony, his family immediately throws Kati and her son out of the house, her only hope for survival being the little job her protector arranged for her some years before his passing.

Later she marries a lawyer and they open a little second hand bookshop in Budapest – but history doesn't leave much place for domestic idylls in the 1940's, and soon they find themselves printing illegal papers in the attic of the shop and saving Jewish children from the Budapest ghetto: among them, a young boy who is later to become the novel's author's father. It is because of this surprising twist that *A Hungarian Novel* is way more than just the imaginary portrait of a great writer and his last mistress and muse: it is also a confession of the young author, a second-generation Holocaust survivor and son of an assimilate Jewish family, moving to Israel after high school with his brother to reclaim his long-lost cultural and religious identity. If it wasn't for Móricz's mistress who saved his father, Dávid Barna wouldn't be here with us today. It is because of this that he endeavours to retrace the story of this extraordinary woman, who from a poor orphan girl first became a mistress, then from a mistress a muse, then from a muse – a hero.

Since the novel is more about private affairs and relations, and the life work of Móricz serves rather as a backdrop for the story, it is not necessary for the reader to be familiar with the writings of [Zsigmond Móricz](#) or his place in the history of Hungarian literature in order to enjoy this thin little masterpiece. Even more so that on the other hand, *A Hungarian Novel* gives a unique portrait of everyday life in the Hungary of the thirties and the forties, with a vivid atmosphere and fast-paced dialogues worthy of the best film scripts.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dávid Barna was born in 1982 in Budapest. After studying in Budapest, he left the country for Israel after high school. He graduated at the University of Tel Aviv, and currently lives in Jerusalem. *A Hungarian Novel* is his first book.

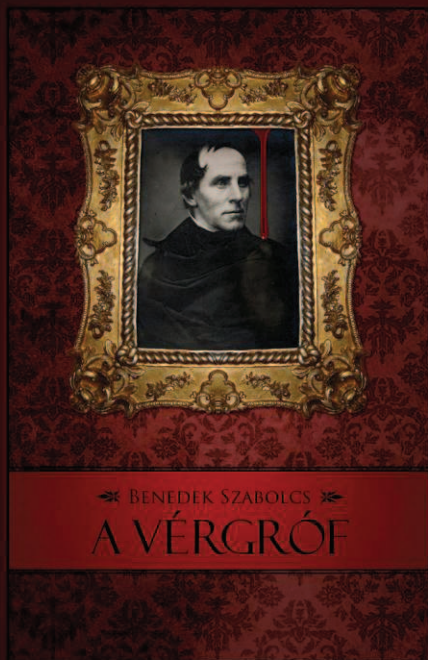


Szabolcs Benedek

THE BLOOD TRILOGY

*The first-ever authentic
vampire story from the place
where the legend comes from:
Hungary*





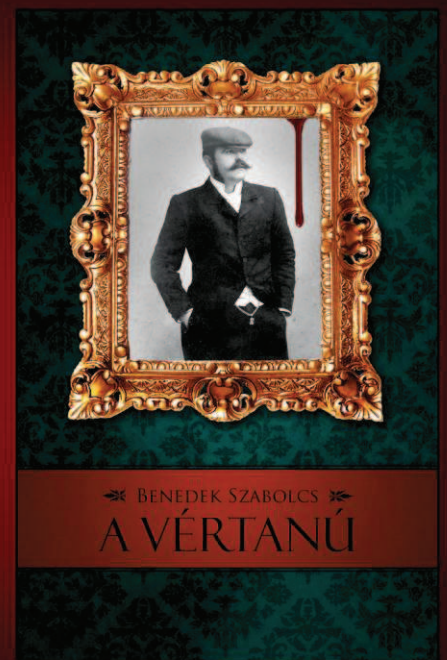
THE BLOOD COUNT

2012.03.09.



THE BLOOD COUNTESS

2012 fall



THE BLOOD MARTYR

2013 spring

The new vampire trilogy of Szabolcs Benedek invites the reader to a riveting trip to Budapest and the environs of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy at the turn of the century. Spanning from 1910 to 1918, the three parts can also be read individually, but it is together that they draw up the complete story. The main protagonist of the novel is the Count of Saint-Germain, a historical figure who claimed to have lived through the whole of European history and also claimed to be the descendant of a Transylvanian Prince. It is with him that the other protagonist, the mortal Titus Szállási becomes friends in Budapest, revealing together a series of brutal murders and even trying to track down the father of all vampires, Drakula in Transylvania...

Although Hungary and Transylvania is often associated with vampires and other mythical creatures, this is the first time that a Hungarian author endeavours the great task of telling a vampire saga. While introducing the reader to the flourishing social and artistic life of fin-de-siècle Budapest and it's region, these novels also show the downside of it's society through the detailed picture they draw of prostitution and the poverty of the working class at the time. And although the author fully respects the rules of this very special genre, that doesn't keep him from making a few jokes about the immense literary tradition that these blood-sucking monsters inspired throughout the centuries...

Complete Hungarian manuscript of *The Blood Count* available (upon request)

Sample translation in English from *The Blood Count* available (see below)

Detailed synopsis of the complete trilogy available (see below)

RIGHTS ARE ONLY AVAILABLE FOR THE THREE BOOKS TOGETHER

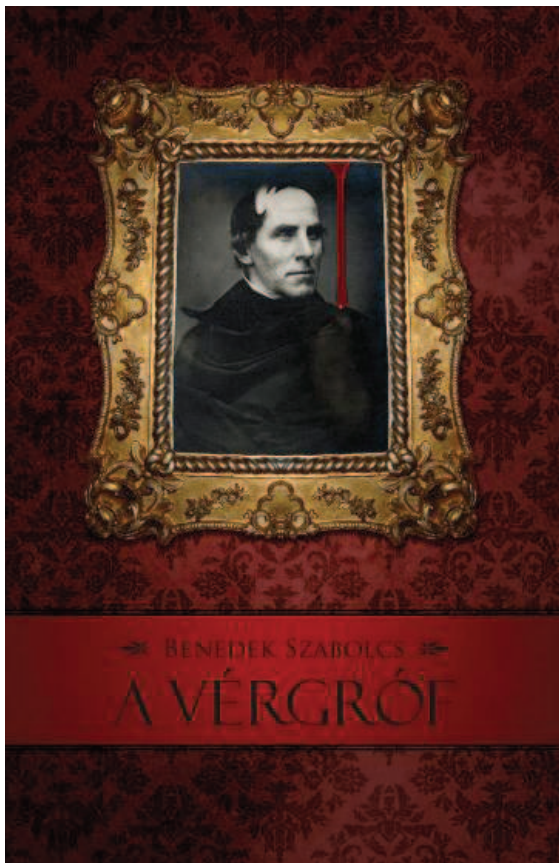
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Szabolcs Benedek was born in 1973 in Budapest, and studied to be a politologist. He began publishing reviews and short stories in 1994. He is the first Hungarian translator of the novel *The Vampyre* by John Polidori, which was published in 2003. Later in 2005 he published the Hungarian translation of the *Dream Journals* by Emmanuel Swedenborg. He lives in Budapest with his two daughters.

SYNOPSIS OF THE TRILOGY

Part one: THE BLOOD COUNT (A vérgróf)

Novel (Libri), 2012.03.09., 480 pages



We are in 1910, Budapest, at the height of the splendor of this „Paris of the East”, the second most important city after Vienna in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy: the Champs-Élysées-like Andrassy Boulevard has new electric lighting, carriages share the crowded roads with automobiles, while art and literature flourish in the cafés and salons. But a series of unimaginably brutal murders disturb the calmness of the city: someone is killing prostitutes in all parts of Budapest, from the luxury downtown bordels to the working-class districts of the suburbs. The body of the murdered girls is always ripped open, and most of the blood seems to have vanished from the corpses.

Ervin Mihucz, a young detective starts to investigate one of the first murders, and soon becomes obsessed with the case, even after it is taken away from him to higher levels of the Budapest Police Department – maybe because he’s visiting prostitutes more often than a decent young man should... Soon he becomes involved

with one of the colleagues of a murdered girl, Sára, who will be his accomplice in trying to solve this mystery.

Meanwhile, Ervin's friend and coffee-house companion Titus Szállási, a young journalist meets a peculiar figure on a boat coming from Vienna to Budapest: a tall, ageless man and his giant-like servant, Mihály. The man claims to be none other than the Count of Saint-Germain and descendant of Sigismund Rákóczi, Prince of Transylvania in the 17th century. He is renting a ghost-castle-like mansion on the Andrassy Boulevard, and wishes to learn more about Budapest, a place where he hasn't been to in the last few centuries. They become friends with Titus, who will move in with the odd pair in the mansion and will serve the Count as his guide to Budapest nightlife, showing him the splendid cafés and cabarets in the city, and introducing him at the parties of high society, while struggling with his on-and-off relationship with Etelka, an actress-turned-luxury prostitute.

Slowly he gets used to the unusual habits of the Count, and just when he starts suspecting that he has something to do with the murders, Saint-Germain reveals him his secret: although being immortal, and having have lived through European history, he was bitten by a vampire during the French Revolution, and has been looking for a cure for vampirism ever since. He did not commit the murders, but visited all the corpses afterwards, and sucked out the blood of the dead girls – but then, who is the serial killer?

Ervin Mihucz is haunted by the same question. One night, he tries to set up a trap for him, using Sára as bait, without success. But that very same night, the killer turns out to be... himself, turning into an aggressive, whore-hating murderer every time he falls asleep. Thanks to Sára and the secret help of Saint-Germain, he is put to jail in the end, while the Count decides to leave Budapest for Transylvania. He hopes to extract the secret of the cure of vampirism from the one person who might know more about this than himself: Count Drakula...



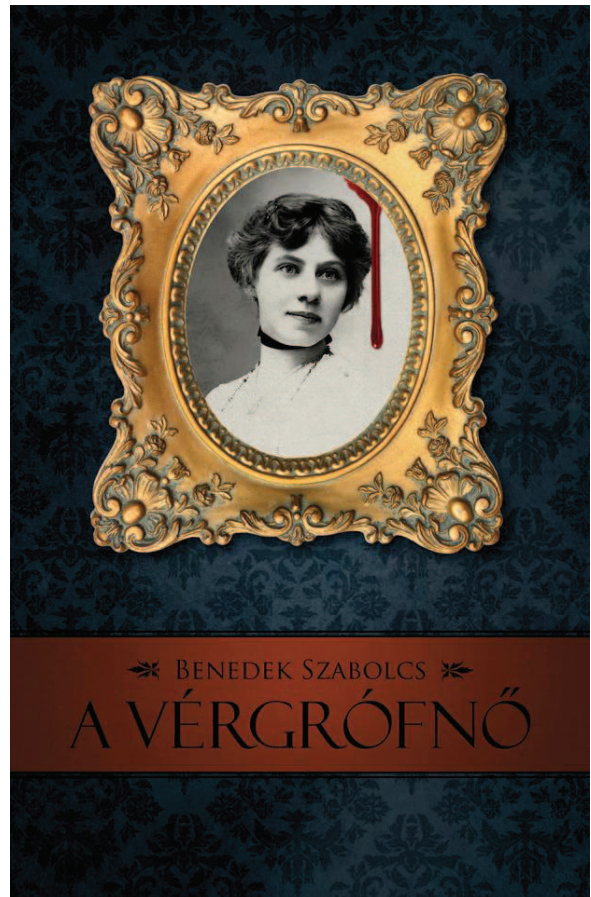
Part two: THE BLOOD COUNTESS (A vérgrófnő)

Novel (Libri), 2012 fall, cca. 500 pages

Five years after the story of *The Blood Count*, we are in 1916, when Romanian troops invade Transylvania, then the part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Titus Szállási arrives to the front lines as the correspondent of a Hungarian newspaper, but also hopes to meet again with his long-time friend the Count of Saint-Germain.

Meanwhile in Budapest, Titus's ex-lover Etelka shows up by the side of a new football prodigy called Kristóf Bieber, who after a spectacular start falls out of grace in his Budapest team. He signs a new contract for a football team in Cluj, and Etelka moves with him to Transylvania. It is there where they become acquainted with the Count Drakula, who agrees to make a successful footballer from Bieber once again, provided that he gives Drakula the one he cherishes the most: Etelka, who herself is too thrilled to become a vampire then to think about Bieber – so in the cadre of a „black wedding”, she gives her soul to Drakula and becomes the new Blood Countess. (Drakula's first love and first wife was none other than Elizabeth Báthory, also known as „the Blood Countess” in history.)

On the other hand Titus, who is trying to track down Saint-Germain and Drakula in Transylvania, gets acquainted with Ágnes, the last remnant of a prominent Hungarian family of vampire hunters. Together they visit the famous castle of Töröcsvár, where Drakula is supposed to be lurking, but the building is closed down by local authorities because of renovations. It is with her that he returns to Budapest, when he finds out that Etelka, Drakula and Saint-Germain are also heading there. Drakula and his new wife are exploring the nightlife of Budapest, and as the number of mysterious murders increases in the city, it will take to joint forces of Saint-Germain, Titusz and Ágnes to stop them.



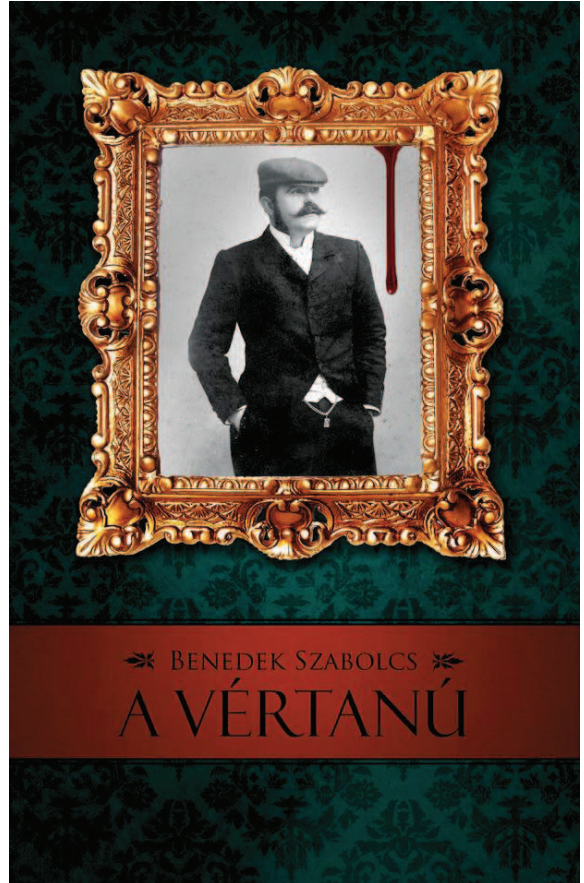
Part three: THE BLOOD MARTYR (A vértanú)

Novel (Libri), 2013 spring, cca. 500 pages

Two years pass. It is 1918: the First World War is over. Etelka and Drakula are roaming the towns and cities of Hungary, visiting the places where Drakula used to live in the times of the Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus in the 15th century. Wherever they go, they leave more and more corpses, but also newborn vampires whom they infected. Ágnes the vampire hunter has a lot of work.

Meanwhile the immortal servant of Saint-Germain, Mihály finally finds the solution for curing Saint-Germain from vampirism: the only way to do this is to find an immortal who willingly sacrifices himself in order to cure someone from the disease. Of course, Saint-Germain knew this all along: he just didn't want Mihály to know, fearing that his friend would immediately sacrifice himself for the cause.

But first, they have to deal with Etelka and Drakula who are at large in Hungary. In their final battle, Ágnes succeeds to kill Etelka the Blood Countess, but Drakula survives and returns to Transylvania. After this, Mihály manages to convince Saint-Germain, and they perform the special ritual which kills Mihály but cures the Count of his dreadful disease. It is only the morning after that Saint-Germain finds out about a curious side effect of the ritual: although he is no longer a vampire, and is able walk in the sun after so many centuries, he has also lost his immortality, and quickly begins to age. Accepting his fate, he prepares himself for his new life as a mortal – only to be dead in a few weeks because of the Spanish Flu that is sweeping through Europe at the time, closing the era when immortals still walked the face of the earth.



Judit Fenákel

Levéláría (*They loved the opera*)

151 pages, Hungary, 1993

“Judit Fenákel’s books speak for themselves. One does not need to point out their worth to the educated reader.” —Imre Kertész

This novel recounts the history over half a century of the love between a man and a woman, filled with doubt and despair, guilt and absolution, a shared childhood, and a shared love of opera.

Before:

Anikó Grossman is a high-school student, the daughter of a wealthy Jewish lawyer living not far from Szeged. She is preparing for her birthday party and is thinking about her presents, but she also thinking constantly about a young man who—as soon becomes apparent—is unattainable to her.

Nine Years Later:

Anikó survives the war and the Holocaust. The first performance of the new opera season is “Madama Butterfly.” She would like to lose herself in Puccini’s music, but the seat next to hers is unexpectedly taken by the man on whom she had long ago had a crush, Kálmán Turián, the son of a prominent judge. He has aged considerably and gives the impression of weariness.

Nine years earlier, they had also sat next to each other for Mascagni’s “Cavalleria Rusticana.” Then, her father was waiting for her in the foyer and said, “It is brave of him to appear with a Jewish girl. You can’t expect anything further from him.” They parted with Mascagni, and met again with Puccini. The two performances separated more than nine years, indeed an entire world. Anikó had lost her parents in the concentration camps, Turián had only recently returned from being held as a prisoner of war. What a difference: voluntarily to depart life like Cho-Cho-San in “Madama Butterfly” or to be gassed like Anikó’s parents.

Anikó and Turián see each other only at the opera. They look forward nervously to the next performance, “Rigoletto,” each fearing that the other will not appear. They listen to Count Monterone’s curse, “...until for the crime that you commit, a stern judge grants me atonement,” and they begin to worry.

Turián wants to meet outside the theater. “You have changed so much,” he whispers in her ear. “How so? What was I like before,” Anikó asks in surprise.

Since they cannot converse at the opera, they begin to bring each other letters to the performances. These letters speak of more than memories of earlier nights at the opera.

Turián finally induces Anikó to meet with him outside the opera. He learns that in the hopelessness of her love for him, she had married a poor young Jewish boy, who was shortly thereafter called up for war work and died shortly thereafter. Her only “memento” of him is a child. On account of her daughter, Anikó entered into a loveless marriage.

The next operas are “Tosca” and “The Marriage of Figaro.” Many of the arias and the accompanying emotions displayed on the stage have a shared symbolism for Anikó and Turián.

Anikó and her second husband, Péter Körösi, become more and more estranged. An unskilled worker, he belongs, according to the Communist ideology, to the “privileged class.” Körösi is “pushed” into a managerial position. He begins to drink and gradually comes to believe that he has been called to something greater. He becomes colder toward his wife and stepchild. He suffers from feelings of inferiority.

Anikó has difficulties at work. Because of her “immoral” romantic attachment she is summoned by the authorities in the name of socialist morality, and a short while later is released. Things go no better with her husband. The time comes when shared drinking sprees and party loyalty no longer suffice for one to hold a managerial position.

Kálmán Turián becomes ill with Ankylosing spondylitis. He marries his therapist, who bears him a son. But from the outset, their relationship was not based on deep feelings. Turián becomes lonely and isolated.

Afterward:

Two old people sit on a bench in a park in winter. A man and a woman. Beside them, a portable radio is playing “Rigoletto.” They simultaneously reach for the search button. Then the woman’s hand glides into the man’s.

“I wanted to listen to music with you,” says Kálmán Turián. “I was thinking of ‘The Barber of Seville,’” replies Anikó. “You owe me that one; there the lovers are united.”

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