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THE ORIGINS OF LEOPOLD BLOOM: AN IMAGINARY FAMILY TREE

Although Irish Hungarian cultural connections have a long history, they remain infrequent. In 1353 György, son of Krizsán, a knight in his twenties, made pilgrimage to Ireland to gain forgiveness for his sanguinary sins in Saint Patric's purgatory and ease his conscience of the 250 murders he had committed. His vision can still be seen today. Some sixty years later another Hungarian, Lőrinc Tari of the Ratold clan arrived in Ulster, who in 1411 visited the sulphurous caves found on the Isles of Angels there and his visions were recorded by Jacobus Yonge, Clerk Royal at Dublin. During the 19th century, however, it was the Irish who travelled to Hungary, as for example, the Egan family who'd settled in Borostyánkő in County Vas.

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If we take into account the English connections, the occurrences become more frequent. Thomas Moore, while in prison before his execution, in his consolatory treatise wrote of the dispute between two Hungarian brothers, Antal and Vince, about the Turkish conquest. During the 1830's Walter Savage Landor wrote a drama trilogy featuring Price András and Johanna of Naples, and later became a firm supporter of Kossuth and the Hungarian War of Independence. Another Irish-Hungarian literary connection was established early in the 20th century when James Joyce chose Szombathely as the birthplace of Leopold Bloom, the main character of *Ulysses* and furthermore, named Bloom's relations as residing in Székesfehérvár.

Although neither literary history nor philology belong to my field of interests, nevertheless I have found it tempting to discover Joyce's rather strange choices for his characters. Since Sabaria, the birthplace of St Martin, became so famous that it was shown amongst the handful of Hungarian place-names on medieval maps, this town from Western-Hungary had hardly been so widely known all over the world had it not been for Joyce's *Ulysses* when the reader in the second half of the novel, at last, discovers the hero's origins and his Hungarian connections.

I was at grammar-school - quite some time ago - when I first heard about Leopold Bloom's Szombathely origins, which gripped my imagination but - like others - I could not unravel its mystery. Not that the fact

alone that a writer, living in Trieste, choosing Szombathely as his hero's origins would be anything unusual. The seaside town of Trieste, whose inhabitants: Italians, Germans, Croatians and Hungarians would have known the surrounding area and would not mix up Budapest with Bucharest. They would have heard of Szombathely too. Just how, at the time of the First World War, Szombathely gained familiarity could hardly be established now. The town's name frequently appeared in the newspapers during IV. Károly's restoration efforts in 1921, Joyce, however, finished *Ulysses* by this time. I thought of St Martin too: Joyce, studying in a Jesuit school, could have heard of the missionary bishop of Gaul. He does mention the bishop, it is true, only in the company of several dozen other saints. That they would have known anywhere that St Martin's birthplace of Savaria is the same as modern-day Szombathely is not at all certain. Could Joyce took a random choice on his map? It would not have been suprising.

Joyce, without doubt, had some knowledge of Hungary, even before he wrote *Ulysses*. As a young man, at the age of 19, he wrote a critique on Mihály Munkácsy's 'Ecce Homo', on an exhibition-tour at that time. In the *Ulysses* he also makes mention of Kossuth, the bears living in the Carpathian mountains (perhaps a Hungarian aristocrat had been the inspiration?), the Austrian tyrant, and states that Rudolf Bloom's grandfather had seen Maria Theresia.

Nevertheless, the reader - especially if he or she is from Szombathely - is left with the feeling that the origins of the Virag-Bloom family were based on facts but, of course, not word-for-word, matching town, name and family-tree. It would have been interesting to find out just what impressions made Joyce to choose Hungarian origins for one of the main hero of his novel.

Although the intention of solving this conundrum remained in me for almost forty years, results did not materialize for a long time. It was nearly fifteen years since the answer - or the possibility of one - had presented itself through a fortuitous chance. So why wait for so long? For a while I thought it is not enough to hold the key to the secret, I'll have to open the door, reserching every detail, every event; and only when all the answers are found, shall I publish. However, I had to compromise my high ideals and cut it to my own possibilities: I am not a literary historian, nor could I achieve the high expectations of my own setting. At the

same time - I must confess - my own vanity was too strong not to publish the results of my researches and labour.

As head-librarian at the Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum [Hungarian National Museum] I endeavoured to obtain the so-far missing historical and archaeological journals from the neighbouring countries. As part of the publication exchange programme from Trieste,¹⁵ volumes of 'Atti e Memorie della Societa Istriana' arrived in 1988. In the 1972 edition I came across the photograph and obituary of Marino de Szombathely, a somewhat unusual name in Trieste. According to the obituary, the 'Sorico e humanista' de Szombathely, who died at the age of 82, in his youth had been engaged in translating Homer's *Odyssey* into Italian, parts of which were published in 1918. So the place, the name, the time and the *Odyssey* all brought him closer to Joyce and without doubt was an important factor in choosing the name and origin of Leopold Bloom, the hero of

20) his novel. Another possible connection is 'Molly', alias Marion, the name of Blum's wife, which Joyce could have used, while the name of Szombathely became Leopold Blum's place of origin. Therefore, it could be speculated that it was not the town, nor someone born in Szombathely, but the name (and person?) of a young contemporary of Joyce, Marino de Szombathely, who had been his inspiration.

Marino de Szombathely was born in Trieste on July 19, 1890, son of Gioachino Szombathely and Irene Boccasini (the mother, too, has Hungarian 'connections' - if only by Joycean conception: Miklós Boccasini, as papal delegate to Hungary had been instrumental in ensuring Károly I of Anjou's succession to the Hungarian throne). Marino de Szombathely could have had Jewish ancestry as in Italy Jews used names of towns as family names. His father was born in the 1860's and it may have been him, who originated from Szombathely. They may have chosen their new name when the family moved from Szombathely to the Adriatic coast. However, their previous name so far is unknown. Perhaps further research in Trieste might establish this. It was customary for emigrants to use town names as family names at their new place of settlement. Issac Hejmans, born in Pozsony around 1747, used the German variant of 'Presburg' as his new family name when settling in Holland. In 1785 he married Nanette Salomons Cohen and from that marriage they had three daughters and a son. The eldest daughter,

Henriette Presburg (1788-1863), in 1814 became the wife of Heinrich Marx and from their marriage a boy, named Karl, was born on May 5, 1818. He was Karl Marx. In contrast, Marino de Szombathely's father or grandfather decided to use the Hungarian and not the widely used German name of Steinamanger as his new family name.

Marino de Szombathely took his final examination at the secondary school in Trieste, and read literature at Rome University where he successfully defended his doctoral philosophy thesis 'Poeti di Casa Sveva: Re Enzo' in 1912. Followig his studies he became a teacher at his old school in Trieste. His first poems were published in 1912 and numerous historical esseys by him also appeared in print. In 1916 he married Zoe Grego and a year later a son, Gabrio was born. In 1918 he became a member of the 'Gruppo Nationalista', an irredentist organisation. During his time as a teacher in Trieste, Marino de Szombathely had been working on the Italian translation of *Odyssey*, a part of which was published in the journal 'Umana' by Silvio Benco in 1918, the complete translation appearing in 1920. I have no information on just when and how widely this new translation of the *Odessey* became common knowledge, nevertheless, it must have been a well-known fact amongst the intellectuals in the city of Trieste. Joyce himself must have known of it, and therefore, the person of Szombathely became an obvious choice to use in *Ulysses*. One of Marino de Szombathely's most important works, however, was considered to be the publication of the 14th-century Statutes of Triest city, published in 1928. From 1952 he became vice-chairman of 'Societa Istriana de Archaeologia e Storia Patria' and he died on June 8, 1972 in his home at Geppa Street in Trieste.

Could Joyce have known Marino de Szombathely? A possibility certainly existed and circumstantial evidence seems to support this. In the autumn of 1912 Joyce began a series of twelve lectures on Shakespeare's *Hamlet* at the Societa di Minerva, lasting into the early part of 1913, while in 1907 and in 1912 he gave lectures at the Universita Popolare, where later Marino de Szombathely himself lectured during the war years of 1914-1918. Being familiar with these places, the Austrian police felt it necessary to keep an eye on him due to his irredentist sympathies. A report, dated 25 September 1918, states that

amongst the papers of Teodoro Mayer, publisher of Trieste, they have found evidence that Marino de Szombathely was a close friend of the Mayer family. If Joyce had really been acquainted with the Hungarian-descended Mayer, then it supports the theory of Joyce too, having met de Szombathely.

The question of the Virag-Bloom family's Székesfehérvár connections (for a non-Hungarian, the near impossible pronunciation name of Székesfehérvár) and second cousin Stephan Virág remained unanswered for quite some time. That the relationship described by Joyce is fictitious or real we cannot know, although I would find it inconsistent with his methods to have used a complete Hungarian family for his novel.

22) During 1932 Dr. D. Brody, on behalf of the Munich-based Rhein-Verlag corresponded with Joyce regarding the Hungarian publication of the *Ulysses*, and in 1935 Joyce had included a review of Valdemar Langlet's 'On Horseback through Hungary' which appeared in the *Sunday Times* and in his letter, dated 27 November, he mentions Szombathely. It is possible, that this had been only an enthusiastic endeavour by a few Hungarian youths in the 1930's, as remembered by László Cs. Szabó, who wished jointly to translate the *Ulysses* into Hungarian.

The answer to the Székesfehérvár-Virág question came as a complete surprise in 1997, when Margit Szakács, research-fellow of the Hungarian National Museum (with her own relations in Szombathely) compiled a list of all Hungarian photographers and photographic studios. Of the several thousand names listed in the book, only two photographers with the name of Virág appears: Pál Virág, who during the 1940's worked at Pestszenterzsébet who, because the obvious date discrepancy, could not be considered. The other was Sandor Virag who lived between 1881-1920 and from 1907 worked at Székesfehérvár until 1916. If only one photographer called S. Virag lived in the entire area of historical Hungary, and at the time when Joyce worked on the *Ulysses*, and worked at Székesfehérvár where Leopold Bloom, alias Lipót-Rudolf Virág's second cousin, Stefan Virág had his studio - could this be a mere coincidence? Joyce independently could have invented the name Bloom, and also could have chosen Székesfehérvár as a location, but this to have coincided with an actual contemporary person, is impossible.

Joyce even retained the initial letter, making Stephen - a frequent-enough Hungarian and English name - out of Sándor.

Just what do we know about Sándor Virág and his studio at Székesfehérvár? Thanks to an essay on the history of photography in Székesfehérvár by Julia Horváth, quite a lot. Virág was born in 1881 at Ozora. In 1907 he had successfully petitioned the city authorities of Székesfehérvár for opening a photographic studio there. The following year, in 1908, he received exemption from military service, which in 1915 he again asked for, citing his studios at Székesfehérvár, Pécs and at Győr under his sole direction as the reason, but was refused. He was posted to the 7th garrison artillery at Komárom, survived the war and returned home in 1918. Following his death in 1920, his widow had sold the business to Károly Tóth, who became Székesfehérvár's best-known photographer between the two world wars.

The Virág photographic studio was situated at No. 5 in Rákóczi Ferenc utca, the street stretching under the ruins of the Royal Cathedral in the city centre. Due to the many name-changes which have occurred since, it became No.2 Szabadság and recently Koronázótér [square]. The history of the building can be traced from the early eighteenth century, when in 1712 András Palaics, bootmaker, built the present house on the site of a previous burnt down dwelling. It had a number of owners, and in 1860 Vilmos Schmidt opened the city's first photographic studio in the building. The house and the studio had been substantially altered in 1876. It suffered bomb damage during WW II and was demolished in 1965. The new building, which replaces it, has been built on pillars to reveal the ruins of the ancient cathedral found at the site.

But all this does not answer the basic question: just how did the Joyce-Virág connection get started? In theory, two possibilities can be considered, although a personal encounter, too, cannot be ruled out. If during WW.I the 7th Komárom garrison artillery regiment had been sent to the Italian Front, then a personal meeting could have occurred. However, the more feasible possibility could be that instead of Virág himself, Joyce had seen a portrait photo, on the reverse side of which he saw the name and address of the photographer. Such a photograph, especially as three Virág studios were working at that time, in all prob-

ability could have reached Trieste. Joyce himself states that. "An indistinct daguerrotype of Rudolph Virag and his father Leopold Virag executed in the year 1852 in the portrait atelier of their (respectively) 1st and 2nd cousin, Stefan Virag of Szesfehervar, Hungary." The photograph and the address on the back was a reality, but the person on the photograph? Hardly one of the Virág ancestors. Possibly a lady or someone's wife - who knows? This will have to remain a mystery. Nevertheless, the photograph must have had such a deep effect on Joyce that he weaved it into the story of Ulysses. The photograph must have reached Trieste via a Hungarian. But who? Who could have been this mysterious Hungarian? A casual acquaintance of Joyce's? Or a member of his regular circle of friends? Perhaps someone he met in one of the pubs - a number of which we know - he frequented in Trieste? Today, one can only ponder...

24) So, Joyce had used Marino de Szombathely's family name as the place from where Leopold Blum originated. He knew that this strange family-name was also the name of an Hungarian town. That Szombathely was not a place-name only, Joyce revealed in his own way, when he describes in evangelical style the "Leopoldi autem generatio" and says "Moses begat Noah and Noah begat Eunuch and Eunuch begat O'Halloran and O'Halloran begat Guggenheim and Guggenheim begat Agendath and Agendath begat Netaim and Netaim begat Le Hirsch and Le Hirsch begat Jesurum and Jesurum begat MacKay and MacKay begat Ostrolopsy and Ostrolopsy begat Smerdoz and Smerdoz begat Weiss and Weiss begat Schwarz and Schwarz begat Adrianopoli and Adrianopoli begat Aranjuez and Aranjuez begat Lewy Lawson and Lewy Lawson begat Ichabudonosor and Ichabudonosor begat O'Donnell Magnus and O'Donnell Magnus begat Christbaum and Christbaum begat ben Maimun and ben Maimun begat Dusty Rhodes and Dusty Rhodes begat Benamor and Benamor begat Jones-Smith and Jones-Smith begat Savorgnanovich and Savorgnanovich begat Jasperstone and Jasperstone begat Vingtetunieme and Vingtetunieme begat Szombathely and Szombathely begat Virag and Virag begat Bloom et vocabitur nomen eius Emmanuel..." The made-up family tree is the result of Joyces typical methodology, as the ".Eunuch begat O'Halloran..." reveals right at the beginning, that such a family tree could not have existed. Also, without much trouble one can spot the

familiarity with contemporary knowledge: the name of Guggenheim in 1912 became well-known from the Titanic catastrophe. The name of Adrianopoli could be a Jewish family-name, but could also be one of the numerous Hadrianopolis towns, the most well-known being Adrianople in European Turkey. The lineage also includes a Spanish place-name, Aranjuez (Schiller: 'Don Carlos' - "The end of the beautiful days at Aranjuez"). Further down in the genealogical table Szombathely begat Virág, which in a sense is true, Marino de Szombathely "begot" Virág - at least in Joyce's imagination and therefore the name of Szombathely, in this instance is not a place-name, but that of a person. Joyce, however, 'did not know' the name of the 28th generation and inserted "vingtetunieme", the French serial number in the list. With 'vingtetunieme' Joyce really interrupts the family tree, suggesting that from then on Szombathely was a 'real' person, that is to say the list prior to 'vingtetunieme' is doubly fictitious, whereas from then on corresponds to the action in the novel, and is authentic.

James Joyce's ideas and impressions are contemporary with the birth of his novel. An order of sequence within the timespan of the novel can only be established by studying the circumstance in which it had been created. When he began writing, Joyce may have known the young Marino de Szombathely, as he was just finishing his university studies at Rome University. Sándor Virág's photographic studio, too, had been working since 1907 and the photograph from there could have easily reached Trieste by 1910 and therefore Joyce may have seen it. These, however, are outward impressions, mere trappings to the story. That if Joyce had used Marino de Szombathely other than his *Odyssey* translation in forming the character of Leopold Bloom in his novel, will require further research.