

STRANGER / STRĂINUL —

Editors / Editori

Zsuzsanna Ajtony– László Hubbes –

Katalin Lajos – Zsuzsa Tapodi

STRANGER / STRĂINUL

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Selected Contributions in Literature, Linguistics, Anthropology,
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comunicării, științe sociale și abordări interdisciplinare

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FOREWORD

In our continually changing world no one can live without meeting the Other – written with capital initial. Confronting with the characteristics of what is Non-Me, Non-Us, that is, with the Other, is indispensable both from the aspects of personal and collective self-definition. We all are more or less involved in the problematics of Strangeness.

Human ethology reminds us that from a biological aspect, humans are part of the animal kingdom, thus we are hereditary genetic bearers of individual or collective aggression. In the course of evolution people have gathered in groups: they interact, collaborate, communicate with each other, they speak languages, they create beliefs and cultures. It is also a genetic factor that we do not favour those outside our community, and we consider them inferior. Still, it is always culture that decides why we are members of a given community, what the differences that separate us from others are; who and what is considered an outsider, or who and what is considered to be an insider.

Reflecting on Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*, in his *Politics of Friendship*, Jacques Derrida presents us the hope of a radical attitude that is based on friendship which recognizes the stranger not as a foe but one's own self.

For several years, the human sciences and social sciences research groups at the Faculty of Economics, Socio-Human Sciences and Engineering, Miercurea Ciuc of Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania have been engaged with various topics of the stranger. The most important domain of study of the researchers at the Department of Humanities is linked with foreign language teaching, but since 2007 they have also been involved in analyzing national, ethnic, religious and gender stereotypes in literature and cultural representations. The results of their imagological investigations have been presented at five international conferences organized by this research group, and published in nine volumes of conference proceedings. The Workshop for the Study of Modern Mythologies has been established within the framework of the Society of Cultural Anthropology from Hungary in cooperation with researchers of the Department of Social Sciences of Sapientia University and colleagues from the Joint Research Group for the Study of Religious Culture based at the University of Szeged and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The aim of this Workshop is to investigate contemporary mythic discourses through the approach of sociology, anthropology, communication, media and other social sciences, and they have dedicated several conferences and symposia, as well as academic publications to these myths.

International Conference IDEGEN/STRĂINUL/STRANGER took place on 21–22 April 2017, and it focused on literary, artistic and media representations of the Stranger, discourses concerning foreign languages, contemporary mythologies of strangeness present in Hungarian, Romanian, European or universal culture; analyzing their social contexts, the circumstances of their emergence, their (economic, political, psychological) motivations and their symbolism.

The researchers at the Department of Humanities and the Department of Social Sciences of Sapientia University invited not only Romanian and Hungarian specialists, but also internationally acknowledged representatives of academic life from the United States to Japan, from Sweden to Italy, all brought together to jointly seek answers to the questions of “strangeness”. The interdisciplinary nature of the conference is well demonstrated by the fact that parallel sessions of anthropology, communication studies, literary and linguistic studies, social sciences, as well as interdisciplinary sections were running for two days. Lectures were held in Hungarian, Romanian and English, and were followed by heated debates.

There were 115 lectures presented at the conference, and the present volume contains a selection of studies developed from the Romanian and English presentations.

We hope that all who are interested in the artistic or media representations of the Stranger, one of the most important problems of our times, or those who wish to understand the social phenomena and historical processes related to this topic will read our book with great interest.

The Editors

FOREIGNERS IN SÁNDOR MÁRAI'S WRITINGS WITH AN EMPHASIS ON HIS ARTICLES FOR NEWSPAPERS

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Abstract. In analysing some of Sándor Márai's articles, which were written mostly during the first stage of his long career (1920–1933), the paper focuses on the way the author describes strangers and foreigners in different circumstances and from different points of view in post-war Europe who, among others, also suffered from political murders and a financial crisis. I address the question of what it means to be a foreigner in Germany, France or Hungary, according to him. What does it mean to be a *métèque*? What does it mean to be Hungarians or Russians and live in exile?

Keywords: strangers, foreigners, strangeness, foreignness, Sándor Márai, journalism, *feuilletons*.

One of the most interesting topics in Sándor Márai's writings is the description – from so many points of view – of foreigners (people coming from another country, Hun. *külföldi*, *idegen*) and strangers (people you do not know, Hun. *idegen*) in his many writings from the newspaper articles, through the complete diary, to the different novels. In the present paper, I would like to expose the different meanings of being a foreigner/stranger in the post-war Europe characterised by Márai (1900–1989) in his newspaper articles and *feuilletons* sent to the newspapers of Košice, Prague, Bratislava and later on Budapest from and after his first exile in the West after the political events of 1919, namely the Hungarian Soviet Republic (from 21 March to 1 August 1919).

Márai began to publish at the age of 15 (Ötvös 2012a, n. p., Ötvös 2012b, n. p.) and we can find articles written already at the beginning of the 1920s in which the representation of the foreigners/strangers plays an important role. Who are the emigrants/foreigners mentioned and depicted in these writings? Are they (well) tolerated or accepted? Are they assimilated in the target culture and community? What kind of foreignness or strangeness do they suffer during their exile? Is

Márai's point of view inclusive or exclusive? What kind of foreignness can we talk about (cultural, temporal or geographic foreignness)? Finally, what is Márai's personal perception of his own conditions of being an emigrant?

During the period he lived in Germany and France (October 1919–1928), he wrote his articles to Hungarian and German newspapers and often these writings prove that he watched and described people very carefully in dealing with, but not limited to, the division between Germans and foreigners/expatriates/émigrés or between French people and foreigners/expatriates/émigrés.

In the autobiographical article *A fa Elzászban* [*The Tree in Alsace*] written in September 1921 and sent to the Hungarian-language *Kassai Napló* [*Journal of Košice, 1884–1929*] (Márai 1921a, 3), he comments on the Treaty of Trianon (1920) and the fact that Slovakia – and thus also the city of Košice [Márai's birthplace] – passed from Hungary to Czechoslovakia. In this piece, he refers to Upper Hungary comparing it to Alsace, the well-known historical region located on France's eastern border. (In its history, Alsace also suffered territorial changes and, after the war, with the Treaty of Versailles signed on 28 June 1919, the provinces of Alsace-Lorraine were reannexed to France). Márai writes the following:

My acquaintance also writes me to say that, if I come back to Alsace, I will have to be prepared to see major changes. There are many, many new people there. I will hardly find an acquaintance. And the tree – well yes, they cut it down. People lose things and find new ones instead. People walk around and lose more and more of the old things and feel less and less favourable of finding new ones. It's not even possible to explain things violently. Surely some kind of worm was placed on that tree. Instead of the tree, people receive a lot of new and foreign people. It's a bad exchange. Slowly people remain alone. (Márai 1921a, 3)⁵

In this first article, he writes about the Treaty of Trianon and the territorial loss suffered by Hungary from the point of view of a young practically bilingual Hungarian who grew up in Košice, even if he left his birthplace very early, already at the age of fourteen and, in 1921, he commented on the political events and territorial change from afar.

At the end of 1921, in the article *Magyarok* [*Hungarians*] published again in *Kassai Napló*, he describes those Hungarian emigrants living in Germany who he used to meet “after midnight when the Germans already had gone to sleep”: “But they are all mad, all of them. They are Hungarians. At home, among us, we do not

The translations from Hungarian are my own throughout the article.

feel it so much that we are mad. We have a racial disease: that of being Hungarians. But here, where the kings' water of the habits of foreign species sprinkles on us from each gesture, we show our true face" (Márai 1921b, 2). According to the author, after midnight, usually the Germans go home, and public spaces are filled only with foreigners (Hungarians, Swedish and Japanese people, etc.). At this point, those Hungarians – who until that moment were emigrants in a foreign country and completely strangers to each other – also begin to sing together:

The bodies who share the same blood begin to sparkle. Someone sits at the piano and touches the piano keys: Cluj, Košice. Six complete strangers. Women and men. A glass of wine in front of them, twilight in the room, the musicians are already gone, the waiter is sleeping in the corner. They are humming: Cluj, Košice. Old Kuruc songs, songs from Transdanubia, from the Great Hungarian Plain, from Upper Hungary, from the bank of Tisza, from Hortobágy that we did not know we knew. It's our blood and not our mind that preserved the memoir of these songs. [...] Those who sing these songs came here because the exploited Hungarian sod already did not tolerate them. Everyone has some problems with themselves with their destiny, with their race. Everyone is injured, corroded, anxious and trampled. These are the Hungarians – and not those few who in shouting define themselves as Hungarians on the devastated arena at home. These are the helpless or bearers of the Hungarian destiny since Árpád. These are the anxious, the eternally thirsty persons whose thirst cannot be quenched by Hungarian wines. What are they looking for here? They are driven and beaten through the world by their blood. They are swindlers of destiny, they are Hungarians. You, swineherds munching at home at the cauldron, you do not know how it's possible to love this language, this land, this destiny and how inexorably and unmercifully it's possible to love this dented and ungraceful Hungarian globe and with what defiance, with what eyes turned away and with what pride it's possible to profess from afar, among all the nations, the Hungarian misery. (Márai 1921b, 2)

Márai emphasises the spatial distance and the different way of thinking between Hungarians in exile in Germany and those who live in the fatherland, while he assumes a twofold position: at the beginning, we can imagine him in the company of his compatriots during the Berliner nights, but then he switches his point of view and observes these melancholic and distrustful Hungarians as an outsider, as someone who does not share their destiny.

At the beginning of 1922, he sent another article to *Kassai Napló* focusing on foreigners. In this case, Márai portrays the Russians living in the Capital of the Weimar Republic. The meeting place of these émigrés/emigrants is a dirty Russian pastry shop, which is usually not frequented by Germans and which the journalist seems to know rather well. Already in this early article, Márai tries to depict the cultural and linguistic otherness and estrangement of Russians and the difficulty of their assimilation in Europe. According to the data shown by Márai, 150,000 Russian emigrants lived in Berlin in that time, wasting their time away, as they really believed that they would return to Moscow very soon. These Russians “[a]re foreigners in Europe. In the morning, after waking up, they look around reluctantly on the street, then they buy newspapers, put on the collar on the coat and quickly they go to the Russian pastry”. (Márai 1922a, 87–89)

In April 1922, in his article *Gyilkosok városa* [*The City of Murderers*], Márai reports on one of the cruel facets of post-war Berlin, “the modern Babel”: the political murders. The occasion is given to him by the news of the discovery of a corpse near a bridge of the Spree. The victim is an Armenian woman, who in two weeks was preceded also by two Turks and a third unknown man. In all these cases, the killers were always Armenians and according to Márai

[i]n Berlin, in the city invaded by foreigners, there is every indication that an organised political crime network is lurking. [...] From the conclusion of peace from all the new states of Europe, and especially from the Balkans in a narrower and broader sense, slowly all those people have already visited Berlin, who did not feel well at home for some reason. Berlin is invaded by foreigners, mostly by Czechs and then by a good number of Hungarians, Turks, Armenians, Yugoslavs and Romanians: quite a small Entente, organised white and red associations, a good part of a precarious existence, who, when away from their homes, from one day to the next, barely earn their living and are available readily for this or that. Foreigners are strangling Berlin [...] The Berliner Police Chief is now planning on sifting through the foreigners living here. Every foreigner who is summoned by the Police must appear and show how they live and if it is absolutely necessary to stay in the country. In this way, they hope to get rid of some dangerous strangers. The Berliners are starting to get tired of their foreign killers. They say they have enough among themselves. (Márai 1922b, 94–95)

This is only one of those articles that deal with political murders in Germany and with other kind of foreigners. Here, we cannot find the already well-known

category of emigrants, but foreigners are ruthless, skilful and avid killers. In the background, Márai mentions the measures taken by the Police to discourage the arrival of other similar foreigners in the country, but these are not really efficient and humiliate the honest strangers.

With the title *Bavariária* [*Bavariaria*], in October 1922 Márai wrote two pieces on Munich: the first is *A buta város* [*The Stupid City*] and the second is *A fehérek* [*The Whites*]. In both writings, Márai describes the violent political atmosphere that prevailed in Bavaria and in the city of Munich, where the ultra-nationalist force Organisation Consul operating in the country in 1921 and 1922 was founded. The Organisation Consul carried out hundreds of political assassinations including the murder of important prominent politicians such as Matthias Erzberger (killed on 26 August 1921). One of the two killers, Heinrich Tillessen, is mentioned by Márai at the end of the second writing as a perpetrator who lived under an assumed name for a certain period also in Budapest. In this article, focusing on the white terror, Márai also talks about foreigners and complains about the behaviour of the Munich Police:

The foreigners must appear at the Munich Police within twenty-four hours. In the big and small hotels and pensions, they keep control night and day, wherein unpleasant young civil policemen appear and request your passport. I received a visit from such a bug at seven in the morning. I was sleeping. I was outraged. At the police station, for a stay of a few days, foreigners with a strong currency must pay a fee of four thousand marks. On the rotten wall of the office there was the photo of King Ludwig. The born-in-the-purple stands there above his officials in civilian clothes and with a red nose. While the officer investigated my passport, I gazed at the dead king's portrait nervously in silent shame and humiliation, and because of this most damned torture that mars all human dignity. (Márai 1922c)

In *Oroszok* [*Russians*] (1922d), Márai turns to write about Russians, who between 1917 and 1922 invaded Berlin, Paris, London, Munich, etc. After two years of observing them, he affirms that due to their cultural, historical and linguistic otherness, for him and for the Europeans it is not possible to understand the Russian character and psyche: "The reality is, and to reach this conclusion I needed two years of life with them, that what we, Europeans, recorded under the concepts of Russian ideals and Russian materials, is elusive for us such as any ideal emanated by a material of unknown composition." The estrangement of Russians cannot be bridged by their books either: "those that brought their books over, for

centuries they have been nothing other than reports in a foreign language: about the peculiar life of a foreign race and there is no translation that managed to take me in an absolute intellectual proximity to this language.” Márai tried to understand Russians and the Russian emigration, he read their books, attended their theatres and their homes and, in this article, he concludes that the Russians did not assimilate: “as the Jews, oil in water, with a specific character and properties, they swim separately. They do not attend German places, even after four or five years of their stay, they work and use the German language with difficulty, they do not have the slightest relationship with the life of Germans. They are just here. And they are tolerated, rather with pity than with friendship.”

The foreigners described in Márai’s writings are not only white emigrants living in Germany or in France, but also others, e.g. Malaysians in *Malájok* (Márai 1921c) or persons of colour such as in *Napló [Diary]* (1922e) in which he refers to a short communication of a newspaper from Leipzig that informed the readers about the death sentence of a black soldier in service in the French Army near the Rhine who raped a white woman. Márai criticises the French Army because

[o]n the one hand, it massacred the foreign soldiers in piles and, on the other hand, for years it has kept them there, near the Rhine. Who were the people who the blacks violated and why did they do it? Well, we could discuss about that a lot from a human and also from a medical point of view, but the fact is that with the colourful occupying troops the French generals violated the East and Europe in the same manner; this is the white and shameful truth.

In the article, Márai focuses on the racial otherness and discrimination and also condemns the tone of the German article. This “telegraph” gives the occasion for the writer to describe how Berliners treat persons of colour. The protagonist of the piece is Bello, a young black cigar seller in a Berliner restaurant: “He is walking around in the refined hall with flowers, lanterns and music wearing a white coat, with the cigar box on the shoulder, with woolly hair, dark, sad and black muzzle – in his eyes there is so much remoteness, strangeness and otherness, that it feels bad to talk to him”. The young man laughs at command and for money, and his behaviour and the whole scene is described by Márai as something terrifying and beastly. Finally, Márai expresses his desire to see a schoolbook published about joy and values of life, truth and love, etc. for the post-war children.

On 8 March 1924, *Egy órülttel [With a Madman]* appeared in *Kassai Napló*. Márai sent the article from Florence in which he reveals his thoughts about Fascist Italy and depicts the behaviour of an Italian mad woman in a pastry shop.

Therefore, in this writing, we have a different kind of representation of foreigners: on the one hand, he describes a group of Italian lawyers from Fascist Italy (representing a cultural, political and linguistic otherness) and a mad Italian woman (representing mental otherness, but also linguistic and mostly temporal foreignness) and, on the other hand, there is a young Hungarian man and at that time a journalist writing in Hungarian and in German during his Italian holiday. Márai observes an elegant elderly woman sitting for hours with a cup of coffee and talking to herself. The writer feels sorry because he does not understand her foreign language and cannot understand the authentic discourse of a lonely person, of a person who utters everything. He changes his mind when the mad woman starts to talk about him:

This afternoon she talked about me. Probably she noticed that I was watching her. Suddenly, shocked and blushing to the roots of my hair, I felt and I knew that a foreign person in front of me is watching me intently and thinking about me aloud. And in addition, in a foreign language – it was horrible. In fact, this is what I have always wanted – but now I was pervaded with horror, no, no, stay in the dark, not to know it, not to hear it ever, ignore it!

On 27 April 1926, he published *Ünnep után Párisban* [*After Celebrations in Paris*] in *Prágai Magyar Hírlap* [*Hungarian Newspaper of Prague*] (1926a) in which he depicts the Parisian atmosphere at the end of the first *Cartel des gauches* (1924–1926) and the financial crisis. Besides the political facts, he also reports on the attitude of French people towards foreigners by describing a specific episode:

In the meantime, on Montmartre, in the evening, a car full of foreigners was surrounded with hostility by a crowd of Parisian bystanders and with all the signals of the passion they began to insult the Americans. ‘Death to Americans!’ – they shouted at the passengers of the car who by chance were really American tourists and who did not understand a word of French and they considered the shouts of the crowd an ovation and they shouted back suavely, ‘Bonjour! Bonjour!’

According to this article, foreigners do not enjoy the best considerations among French people, they are tolerated, but not welcomed and they are considered a crowd that does not understand the French language and spends money frantically. Paris, but also the vacation destinations, are invaded by foreigners, such as Czechs, Hungarians, English people, Americans, Dutch, Swedes, Spaniards and Germans, so especially here again Márai deals with cultural, linguistic, spatial and

historic foreignness and with the impossibility of assimilation into the French society. Foreigners are not only merchants, writers, artists and wealthy travellers any more, but also persons belonging to the inferior social classes, and so the topic of social otherness and discrimination is also on the background of this article.

In 1926, in his column entitled *Párisi napló* [*Parisian Diary*], Márai deals with the strangeness between Germans and French people not in everyday life but rather from a literary point of view. In fact, Germans seem to be well tolerated and even welcomed in France without difficulties, but there is a gap between the two nations, which manifests itself when German artists come face to face with the new French literature:

[b]ut here there is something between the two spirits, between the German and French spirits, besides the original diversity, there is some new strangeness. This is the yellow book that today Germans do not want and German novels and drama are those that, today, Frenchmen do not want. They want each other's wine, fabric, silk, machines, drugs and luxury goods. Moreover, what is "new" in a timely manner, divided and interrupted by the war in the intellectual life of the two populations, is not able to find a connection. As if they speak two languages: French and German. But the intellect never speaks in the language of the races, the intellect speaks in the language of the spirit, even if not in its final stylistic elegance, but essentially it is international.

Márai had the chance to also meet German artists in Paris and thanks to his readings and stay first in Germany and then in France, he is well informed about the state of his contemporary German and French literature. According to his writings, in post-war Germany, the new generation of writers tried to introduce new trends in drama and prose, "raised the voice of conscience; among fellow-citizens he looked for the man and beyond the man he looked for humanity":

And this is the huge surprise of the German tourist after ten years: In Paris, nothing has changed. The German writer is astonished when after ten years he takes the new French books in his hands: today the French writer is still writing about people and not about humanity. The French novels did not learn and did not forget anything. [...] They do not know what is happening in the post-war world? They know it. The French writer continues to write the yellow novel according to his best conscience, while the German writes, due to his problems, he is already unable to get to the romance bit. And here, at this point, there is

something between the two spirits that is probably irreconcilable. [...] The French writer even in these years is more interested in life, and the German writer in these years is more interested in his conscience.

In January 1927, in the article *A csúnya idegen* [*The Nasty Foreigner*], Márai describes, in a very clear manner, the way in which Parisians treated and made use of foreigners unscrupulously during the financial crisis and after it:

The nasty foreigners are starting to leave Paris. The ugly, dirty foreigners as the French say it eloquently. There is no other language in which the word 'foreigner' is so aggressively and so raspily stressed with connotations and rings with such a narrow-mindedness, so avidly, with such a hostile manner and narrow-minded as in this eloquent language. Now, the nasty foreigners are leaving, they are taking ships and pulling ashore at the Statue of Liberty, back to the pub, where they were barmen for four years and from where he came to Paris for half a year with four hundred dollars to be a Yankee. The nasty foreigners are travelling with the Parisian express, with the Simplon Express to Vienna, with the Orient-Express and the Calais-Dover passenger train. There are people who cry and there are people who spit at them. But neither those who are crying, nor those who are spitting at them, allude to them differently than the nasty foreigners. The nasty foreigners, who live here, do not earn a penny from them, from the French, whereas they spend among them all their money gained abroad. Sometimes, when they remember who they are, they turn crimson. The nasty foreigners remain silent and spend their money because they are guests and have no other possibilities. The French shout because they are the hosts and because now the nasty foreigners are starting to leave. While the French currency was depreciating, they could shout justly because of the situation that happened in Paris last summer, it was necessary to have a strong stomach. But in that case, the French host remained silent, distributed hundreds of thousands of visas with open arms because he was earning, he was earning money, he was earning the sweet Frank, billions of it. And the inflation enticed the nasty foreigners, the small people, the persons of no significance, who sometimes were really nasty and who otherwise would not have dreamt of coming to Paris, the grocers of Munkács, the waiters of New York and the chambermaids of Stockholm. And the Balkans, Central Europe, America, Asia and Africa were all coming. They were a multitude; that is certain.

At the end of the article, Márai also reveals his personal feelings concerning this condition of being a foreigner in Paris:

This is a rather tiring and rather unenviable condition to live in Paris for a long period as a nasty foreigner. Sometimes it seems to me to be unclear. They talk to the foreigners not in a condescending manner, but somehow differently, always with a bit of magisterial tone and their every second word is that 'at our place' – briefly 'here', here in France, briefly in the hub and on the top of the universe and on the zenith of all available and imaginable human culture and accomplishments – it is customary like this and not like that as somewhere at the edge of the jungle, briefly in Vienna. [...] Gradually, people feel ashamed among them and do not insist, but remain silent. Surely the French are right. They are such an important, such an old people, they have already seen and made so many things, that they want to stay among themselves. They have the right to it and who does not like it, well, they should move farther away. I could never understand the foreigners who settled down here for life. Do they really think that at the end of their life their host would treat them as a complete human being? The nasty foreigners could have no other role in Paris but to come and go, possibly to spend a lot and rather go than come. Now the nasty foreigners are going, in the hundreds of thousands. This is odd enough that they are not satisfied with this either.

Besides cultural, historic and linguistic otherness, ethnic otherness (an innate Frenchness) is absolutely dominant in this discourse and these are the main reasons why foreigners are unable to assimilate and feel completely at home even after many years in France.

In January 1928, Márai changes again his point of view, and in *Defekt* [*Breakdown*] (1928) he analyses the strange behaviour of Hungarians living abroad in many places of Europe, something he also frequently witnessed in Paris. Márai became aware of a certain 'breakdown' of the Hungarians living in exile. In 1919, he himself wrote for the periodical *Vörös Lobogó* [*Red Flag*] of the literary left wing and probably this is the reason why in autumn of the same year he left the country:

Where did they become infected by it and when? They do not know. These years, these past ten years were full of such nameless, unaddressed and voiceless murders, the invisible, last stray bullets of the

war grazed them. This one cannot go home because once he participated in an assembly and his name was registered, he thinks that he is wanted, while in most cases nobody bothers about him. How old was he at the time? Nineteen, twenty and today he is already thirty years old and he is still whining and lying low and he will be suspicious for the rest of his life. Another one lost his name somewhere or cannot turn to his family to the occupied regions or he lost his brother, education, address or once a hotel-keeper looked distrustfully at him or a policeman once took him somewhere and slapped him or he had to wait at an embassy for half a day and at the end he was dressed down, [...] All this is not of vital importance, just a breakdown. He does not know what his position is in the world and he does not know what the world thinks about him; one day he moves to another hotel, he does not state the address, does not write to his family and begins to greet people like this, with caution and without confidence.

The question here goes beyond the ethnic or cultural or linguistic foreignness, in fact what is important here is the psychological trauma experienced by all these Hungarians in exile across the continent, their inability to react and return to the fatherland. They are condemned for a whole life to live in mistrustfulness and a kind of fear.

At the beginning of March 1930, he writes an article to *Prágai Magyar Hírlap* [*Hungarian Newspaper of Prague*] (1930a) in which – already from Budapest – he presents his new column *Pesti Nötesz* [*Diary of Pest*] and his aims. Under this column, he wants to publish his confessions and not simply articles for newspapers. In this writing, he describes his feelings and relationship to Budapest and tries to build a bridge to reach those Hungarians also that, after the Treaty of Trianon, remained outside the newly defined borders. He affirms being not of Budapest and that in this city he never felt like he was at home: “I am not of Budapest and I think I will never be. The more I live here, the more I am a foreigner” (1930). After the years spent abroad, he feels that he is a ‘foreigner’ everywhere and forever, abroad as well as at home. Abroad he is obviously a foreigner, even when he speaks the language fluently, the language of the host country, such as in Germany, but after this very important life experience in Europe, far from his birthplace and also far from Budapest and Hungary, he returns to the Hungarian capital quite as a foreigner, as a writer who must learn and perfect the Hungarian language again and he feels rather out of the Hungarian social and cultural context. And even if he

never felt at home in the capital, at that period, his concept of 'home' corresponded to Budapest:

From Paris, where I had my comfortable life, built in existence, possibilities of life and work arose from themselves, I returned home promptly without any external reason or compulsion on the day I found out that all this is only marking time and a costume ball, and that real life and work is at home, where there is no life, neither work – in Budapest – because I have to write in Hungarian if ever I write something, and elsewhere it's worthless.

About his return to Hungary he wrote in detail in *Föld, föld!...* [*Land, land!...*] (Márai 1972, Márai 2014). What is important here is that the writer deals with the concept of otherness and the difficulty of communication between Hungarians inside and outside the newly defined borders.

In his *Ki a "métèque"?* [*Who is the "Métèque"?*] that appeared in the column *Műsoron kívül* [*Out of Programme*] in *Prágai Magyar Hírlap* (Márai 1931), he not only provides a definition of "métèque", but he also writes about a different aspect of the country. After the publication of his novel *Idegen emberek* [*Foreigners*] (Márai 1930b), the editor of a Parisian Hungarian periodical asked him for an article about the problem of *métèque* in relation to his novel. Márai then also sent his writing to the *Prágai Magyar Hírlap* that published the piece on 5 February 1931:

Métèque is someone who one morning arrives at Gare de l'Est usually with one hundred eighty-four Franks in their pocket, who is excitedly looking for the *garderobe* instead of the *vestiaire* and then for long years tries to learn the French life, language, taste, discipline rather hopelessly and something which is not learnable that is congenital to all French porters and that they call "éducation civique" – he is constantly surprised that the French are not kind to him and when he leaves from here, he notices it with surprise that he would not feel at home anywhere else in the world any longer. We – nous autres métèques – who experienced it, we understand. It is impossible to explain it to the Hungarians and to the French.

In the remaining part of the article, Márai focuses on another type of France, briefly, the cultural capital of Europe, a country where the Dreyfus Affair was made possible and where there is freedom of expression. Even if foreigners are called *métèques* in France, they are considered individuals and that is why, in fact, Márai prefers to be a *métèque* in France than something else elsewhere.

In July 1932, he published an article in *Újság* [Newspaper] in Budapest in which he gives a general picture of the emigrants' state of mind, referring to the Russian emigrants in Budapest and in defence of the Hungarian emigrants:

In a certain moment and after a certain period spent in emigration, one morning every emigrant comes to realise that he cannot bear it any more [...] He comes to realize that foreign food is not food, a dream in a foreign bed is a *cauchemar*, a nightmare, foreign streets are improbable and stagy, foreign bread is hatefully white or standard, the inebriation from a foreign wine cannot give oblivion, only disgust, the language spoken around him is a senseless mumbo jumbo. He goes to the café – every emigrant goes to the café once a day – and reads uninteresting and foreign news in the newspapers, because for the person who suffers from the crisis of emigration, everything is uninteresting, that does not refer to the immediate home.

Thanks to his own experience, Márai has a great insight into all the aspects of emigrants' life and knows that usually emigrants disintegrate in sides, quarrel, they are desperate and want to go home. Russian emigrants are tolerated in Hungary, so he solicits the same tolerance towards the Hungarians living in exile.

In 1933, Márai published various articles under the column *A napos oldalon* [On the Sunny Side] in the *Magyar Újság* [Hungarian Newspaper] of Bratislava. On 17 September 1933 (Márai 1933a), he wrote again on France, on the relationships between French and foreigners (the so-called *métèques*) and also about his own position and way of thinking. According to Márai, foreigners, even after many years of a stay, marriage and success, are still unable to assimilate into French society.

In fact, democracy and bad manners are two different things. I could not live among them. (I think it is not possible to live elsewhere, only at home. Once I have to resign to it.) Yes, to be among them from time to time and tolerate that for your money they tolerate you for a short time, ignore their roughness, overlook their eagerness, their avid extortion, do not listen to their hate and enjoy everything that here is unrivalled and unique: their language, the smell of the city, the superiority of their intellect, their architecture, their painters and writers, the smile and elegance of a woman as she gets on the bus, the perfect frame of an evening in the theatre, the inventiveness of their restaurants, a drop of their incomparably fine wines, admire from a distance their busy, sober

and disciplined life... yes, I will do it always with the greatest pleasure. Every year for two months. But I could never live here. They are hopelessly foreigners, and I know that in spite of their indifference towards every foreigner and their almost cruel and inhuman refusal shown towards the world, there is also evolution in France, development and civilization in the highest degree. (Márai 1933a)

With all their faults, he understands French people and their behaviour: "I have also suffered from this indifference and I drew my conclusions from it in a timely manner, and still I wanted to understand it and it is not my fault, but I have to admire them completely. They know it so well what they need... E.g. they do not need foreigners." (Márai 1933a).

This is the period in Márai's life when he already returned to Hungary, precisely to Budapest, but his return was something gradual and from 1928 he still spent several months abroad. At this point, concerning his concept of 'home' and 'foreignness'/'otherness', we can reread also the pages of *Egy polgár vallomásai (1934–1935/1940)* [*Confessions of a Bourgeois (1934–1935/1940)*], which is already in collision with what he declared in 1930 in his *Pesti Nesz: "What 'home' meant to me, authentic and real home, well, it was Kassa and Rozsnyó, Lőcse and Besztercebánya, but I could not go there. In Transdanubia or in the region between the Danube and the Tisza, I always walked as if I had seen it in my dreams and a little bit as a foreigner. The notion of 'home' has forever remained Felvidék (Upper Hungary)"* (Márai 2013a).

A week later, he published another piece in the same column of *Magyar Újság* of Bratislava (Márai 1933b), in which he also describes London which never wanted foreigners. In this writing, Márai is surprised, as England is trying to entice foreigners to the country, even if the description is rather ironic.

England is enticing foreigners to the country because it needs foreigners and currency... How much the world had turned! But they are enticing with moderation; for now, they do not accept all the money and persons, even if in transit, with no pleasure. They have five million people in surplus and they do not know what to do with them. These five million English people are a bigger problem for them than India and the dominions put together. That is the point, on the sunny side. (Márai 1933b)

Reading the article, through Márai's eyes, we can see how the financial crisis is able to transform, even if only slightly, the attitude of a nation towards foreigners.

As mentioned above, among others, in 1934 and 1935 he published *Egy polgár vallomásai (1934–1935/1940)* [*Confessions of a bourgeois (1934–1935/1940)*] (Márai 2013a), in 1936 *Napnyugati őrzéskor* [*Western Patrol*] (Márai 2003) and then with the rolling by of the years, by the 1940s, he arrived at a new condition of foreignness in Hungary and later to exile, a process which is well documented also by *Hallgatni akartam* [*I wanted to keep silent*] (Márai 2013b) and the complete version of *Föld, föld!...* [*Land, land!...*] (Márai 2014). After his progressive return to Hungary from 1928, by 1930–1931, Márai felt at home in Budapest and, at the same time, the most prolific period of his life (1930–1942) was starting. The representation of foreignness in his writings published from the early 1930s on could be the topic of other research papers.

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