



***We wish all our kind Readers a very blessed Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year!***

***Áldásos karácsonyi ünnepeket és békés, boldog új évet kívánunk minden kedves Olvasónknak!***

## Betlehem

*Fekete István*

*Fekete István describes a youthful experience when he and his friends went through the village at Christmas time with a manger scene in the traditional "betlehemezés". They would recite the Christmas story at each house and be rewarded with donations of small change. They were so successful that the spirit of Mammon got hold of them all, and almost led to their tragic end.*



A konyhában ültünk a földön és a tűzhely meleg fénye kiugrott néha, megmagsimogatván arcunkat. Hallgattunk, de magunkban megvallottuk, hogy a mű tökéletes, és nem is vettük le a szemünket róla. Tornya volt, ajtaja volt, ablakai voltak, ahol be lehetett tekinteni (egy krajcárért), és ha bent meggyújtottuk a kis gyertyát, kiivilágosodott az egész épület valami boldog, meleg világossággal, mint a szívünk abban az időben. Egyszóval: Betlehem volt. A Szent Család kicsit oldalt állt előtér-

ben a jászollal s a jászolban Jézuskával, aki mosolygott, és kövér kis kezét ökölbe szorította, ámbár, mi akkor még nem gondoltunk arra, hogy ha ez a kéz egyszer kinyílik, mekkora ragyogás árad belőle a világra.

Ennél sokkal nagyobb gondjaink voltak Elsősorban az, hogy Jézuska mezítelen maradjon-e, vagy takarjuk be.

-Mégfázik! – mondta Bence Gábris, aki érzékeny lelkű fiú volt.

-Buta vagy – szolt Andók Pista -, aki Isten, az nem fázik.

- A biblia azt mondja – szólalt meg végül Peszelka Péter, aki papnak készült -, hogy „édesanyja pólyába takarta és jászolba fektette...”

Ez döntött.

A pólya természetesen nem lehetett akármilyen anyagból, ezért selyemből lett, a selyem pedig anyám télikabátja béléséből.

Másodsorban ott volt még a szamárkérdés.

Két szamarunk is volt ugyanis.

Peszelka Péterre néztünk, aki csizmája orrát vakargatta piszkos kis körmével és lesütvén szemét erősen gondolkodott, de aztán kivilágosodott értelmes, fanyar arca:

-Az nincs a bibliában, hogy hány szamár volt. Több pásztor volt, hát szamár egy se volt...

Subák, láncosbotok, bajuszok és szakállak, kucsmák és tornyos angyalsüveg már készen voltak, így semmi akadálya nem volt annak a lelkes izgalomnak, amely másnap a faluvégén abban a felkiáltásban érte el tetőfokát, hogy:

-Szabad-e betlehemet köszönteni?

És hulltak a krajcárok...Péter perselyébe, amely mind súlyosabban zörgött – mi tagadás – ébren tartva, sőt fokozva elhivatottságunk érzését. Berta Jancsi ugyan apja szórtarisznyáját is

nyakába akasztotta, hogyha valahol – netán – ennivalót is adnának, de inkább Pétert toltuk előre, zörgő perselyével figyelmeztetve a háziakat, hogy készpénzadományokra rendezkedtünk be.

Na, a büntetés aztán nem is maradt el. A betlehemi csillag ragyogása mellett nem vettük észre a pénz ördögének sátánpofáját, és szenteste – Berta Jancsi pokoli indítványa – elindultunk a szomszéd faluba, most már kizárólag azzal a céllal, hogy a persely tartalmát a végsőkig fokozzuk.

Csendes, borús, mégis kemény alkonyat volt. A hó nem olvadt, a jegenyék felett és a völgyek hajlásaiban fenyegetően kék volt a köd. Azután Király bácsival találkoztunk, a kanászszámadóval.

-Hová mentek gyerekek?

-Csak ide a szomszédba...

Az öreg felnézett az égre...

-Hát nem mondok semmit, de iparkodjatok, mert ujjan idő gyün, hogy megemelegetitek...

-Sietünk Károly bácsi.

Igazán siettünk volna, de úgy megbámulták takaros betlehemünket, úgy tartóztattak bennünket, etettek, itattak (ne mondják a szomszéd faluban, hogy nem látják szívesen gyerekeiket) és főleg úgy tömték a perselyt, hogy se láttunk, se hallottunk.

Pedig közben feltámadt a szél, lenyomta a felhőket és szitálni kezdte a havat a fekete éjszakába. Ezt azonban a házak között alig lehetett érezni, de amikor kiértünk a szabad mezőkre, belénk mart, és engem, aki a betlehemet vittem, majd belelökött a patakba.

-Egyenest! – vezényelt Jancsi, aki nagy lókötő volt, de a szíve helyén - ha a nyárfás utat elértük nincs semmi baj.

-Nem kellene visszafordulni?

-Nem üvöltött Jancsi – engem agyonvernek, ha nem leszek ott az éjféli misén.

Az idő és a tér elveszett. A nagy subákat majd a földnyomta a szél, a hó vágott, mint a jeges vessző, és reszketve izzadtunk, ijedt kis erőnk utolsó megfeszítésével.

Vánszorogtunk. A kis betlehem oldalát már feltépte a szél és kísértetiesen csapkodta a papírt, miközben a toronyban a kis bádogcsengő néha megkondult, mint a lélekharang. Nem tudtuk, hol vagyunk, és szívünk körül halálos hidegen bujkált a félelem.

-Megfagyunk – mondta valaki, mire Bence Gábris leroskadt a hóra, és sírni kezdett, de sírását elkapkodta a sikoltó szél.

És csak álltunk. Összebújtunk Gábris körül, a betlehem lecsúszott a kezemből a hóra és nem hittünk már semmiben, csak az elmúlás borzalmában és már nem is voltunk.

-Imádkozunk! – mondta ekkor Péter, és ennek a szónak a mélységében egyszerre végtelen csend lett, és ebben a csendben alig hallhatóan, mégis világosan megérintett bennünket meleg szárnyával a távoli harangszó.

-Harangoznak – ordított Jancsi -, most már tudom az utat.

-Imádkozunk – mondta Péter, és imádkoztunk.

És éjféli misén otthon voltunk.

És azóta is, ha nagy baj van és kiesik a kezemből a betlehem, azt az imát mondom és azt a harangszót hallom még ma is.

*Fekete István (1900 – 1970) was a farm overseer at Ajka. His writing grew out of his Nature-related experiences. He wrote many youth novels, the first of which was the historical "Testament of Koppány Aga", ( A koppányi aga testamentuma) set in the 16th century, and published in 1937. It was later made into a film. Tüskevár (Thorn Castle), describing a summer holiday of two city boys near Lake Balaton, was awarded a literary prize and was also made into a film. His nature stories, based on his own observations, included "Csi", dealing with a pair of swallows; Bogáncs" (Thistle) about a pumi sheep dog; and "Vuk, the Little Fox", were the most popular and best-loved of his works.*

## A Box of Matches – a modern fairytale

Ella Bitskey

*In 1950, the Communist government of Hungary dissolved all religious orders, and their members found themselves on the street, forced from one day to the next to fend for themselves. They were not allowed to continue their orders' work, but had to find employment in factories and wherever else they could. This story takes us back to those times. (The "Big Lake" refers to Lake Balaton.)*

Once upon a time, in a land far, far away, where Lucifer's hordes oppressed the people with all their might, there lived a people who helped one another. It was a strange world then, around the Big Lake, where these strange people lived – big and small, old and young, poor and yet well-to-do. They had nothing, but as usually happens in fairytales, the poorer someone was, the more readily he shared his nothing with those who didn't even have that much. Because such creatures existed also in those peculiar days. You can believe me; I met one of them myself.

A hard winter was tormenting the people, as if the existing evil was not enough. Whoever managed to get some firewood was warmed by it more than once. Because the wood that he received for shoes, sheets, this or that, had to be cut down first, then dragged home, followed by sawing, splitting and chopping, so that finally the modest daily portion would be found on the bottom of the basket. Those few pieces of wood had the important task of cooking the "mixed soup" and thawing out the numb extremities.

In those days, people ate "mixed soup" (*vegyített leves*), at least that was the name they gave it, because there was not enough potato, beans or even lentils to call it potato soup, or bean soup, or lentil soup. So they put into it everything they found, to thicken it and make its warmth pleasantly penetrate the body. Because in those days only the body needed to be warmed, the heart still beat in its place and did not need outside help.

One frosty, sleety day around Christmastime, a guest arrived. Guests, especially unexpected ones, were rare in those days. But the person knocking was such a droll figure that she could have been a scarecrow on two legs. At first, they didn't want to let her in, but then they recognized her by her voice, her wide gestures. They realized they knew this strange being, they didn't have to be afraid of her; she was a good person, and had only undergone a weird transformation since they had last seen each other. Long ago, one could recognize her by her straight posture, her floor-length black clothing. She always wore that, because it was the outward expression of her chosen way of life as a professor at one of the very well respected but by Lucifer's helpers recently closed Catholic schools run by the nuns. Together with her like-minded companions, she wanted to serve people, and simplicity – the black clothing – was just as much a part of that service as their dedicated, self-sacrificing work. Everything went on in its usual way until one fine day (if one could call it fine!), wicked trolls surfaced from the darkness and dispersed the little company. "Everyone get out, go wherever you want, but don't ever show up here again," they roared. "Scram!" And the next minute they were out on the street, without a roof over their head, without food, and the trolls even forbade them to wear their black garb. And all of them went, where they could.

The December guest arrived at the Big Lake, poor, hungry and cold. She didn't even have clothes. Not only did she have nothing – the people among whom she found herself also lived in very straitened circumstances. Everyone was poor as the proverbial church mouse. But even if they were poor, their heart was in the right place, and they wanted to help. They put their heads together and discussed what they could do. The mixed soup could be stretched for another bowl, but where could they get clothes? Not finding an answer, they asked the advice of their neighbor. But the neighbor could only scratch her head, press her forehead, and finally blurt out that



a sötétből és széjjel űzték az egész kis társaságot. „Takarodjon, ki merre lát, a szemünk elé ne kerüljenek mégegyszer” –harsogták. És fel is út – le is út, már kint is voltak az utcán. Se fedél a fejük felett, se ennivalójuk, de még a fekete ruha viselését is megtiltották nekik a nagyhatalmú manók, élet és halál urai. (Talán nem bírták elviselni, hogy olyan színt hordjanak, mint amilyennel ők ki voltak bélelve?) S ment ki merre látott. A decemberi vendég a Nagy Tó tájékára verődött el éhesen, fázva, nincstelenül. Még ruhája sem volt. De nem csak neki nem volt semmije, azok is szűkösen éltek, akikhez a sors elvetette. Szegény volt bizony mindenki, mint a templom egere. De ha szegények voltak is, a jó oldalon dobogott a szívük, segíteni akartak. Összedugták a fejüket és tanácskoztak, mit is tegyenek. A vegyített levesből ugyan jut majd neki egy tányérral, de honnan szerezzenek ruhát? Mivel a kérdésre önmaguktól feleletet nem kaptak, átmentek a szomszédhoz tanácsért. De bizony az is csak fejét vakarta, homlokát nyomogatta, hogy végül kibökje, menjenek tovább egy házzal, az ő szomszédjához, s aztán ott gondolkozzanak. Így is lett. Addig mentek házról-házra, szomszédtól-szomszédhoz, míg végül az egész falu azon tanakodott, hogy segítsenek ruhát szerezni ennek a nyomorultnak, mikor maguknak is alig volt valamijük. És ekkor csoda történt, a nagy tanácskozásban az egyik asszony agyából kipattant a megoldás! „Ide figyeljenek – mondta -, tudom mit csináljunk. Ide nézzenek rám, itt van rajtam ez a ménkű bő szoknya. (Akkoriban a Nagy Tó tájékán még hosszú bő szoknyát viseltek az asszonyok). Új anyagra a falu összes pénze sem volna elég, de ha kisedek egy szélt a szoknyámból, attól nekem nem lesz semmi bajom. S aztán, ha minden asszony ugyanezt csinálja, össze tudunk mi adni olyan szoknyát, meg olyan ruhát, hogy olyant még a világ se látott!” Nem szaporítom a szót, így történt. Másnap a falu összes asszonya kifejtett egy szélt a szoknyájából s a különböző színű és mintájú, piros, kék, sárga, pöttyös-stráfos-virágos részekből megszületett a világ egyetlen ilyen földig érő bő rokolyája. Büszkéek voltak az asszonyok a művükre s ha feltűnt

valahol a tarkaszoknyás, a szemük mindjárt az ő részüket kereste, s szívüket jóleső bizsergés járta át. De büszke volt ám a tarkaszoknyás is ! Egyenesebb tartással alig járt valaki a faluban, s ha hívták, hogy segítség kell, mert beteg van a háznál, ágynak dőlt valaki vagy sok a munka, boldogan ment házról-házra, hiszen nem csinált mást, mint amit úgy is akart, szolgálta az embereket. Csak éppen ruhát váltott és a földig érő feketét felcserélte ezzel a szemkápráztató tarkasággal. Ebben a furcsa öltözékben volt akkor is, mikor bezörgetett rég nem látott ismerősei házána. Nehéz férfi csizma nyomta a lábát, az egyik falubelitől kapta, a vállát vastag berliner kendő melegítette s karján ott lógott egy fonott kézikosár. „Átjöttem – mondta-, elhoztam amit karácsonyra küldenek a falubeliek, hogy az ünnepek alatt ne szűkölkedjenek. Igaz, nekik sincs sokjuk, de abból a kevésből szívesen adott mindenkinek.” S a kosárból, mint az igazi mesében, előkerült két tojás, egy csupor liszt, pár szem dió, meg egy kis cipó. Aztán keresgélni kezdett bő szoknyája mély zsebében, és előhúzott egy doboz gyufát, s kicsit félszegen letette az asztalra. „Ezt a legszegényebb küldi – mondta -. Ő is akart adni valamit, de hát mása nem volt. Ha nem veszik rossz néven, fogadják el tőle.” S miközben a háziak még az ajándékokat bámulták, úgy eltűnt a furcsa szoknyás-férfi csizmás-berlinerkendős különös karácsonyi angyal, mintha ott sem lett volna. Mert angyalnak kellett lennie, hiszen tudjuk, az angyalok nagyon leleményesek és mindig ott jelennek meg – és mindig akkor – mikor a legnagyobb szükség van rájuk. Ami pedig a külsőt illeti – láttuk – nem válogatósak. S a háziak csak álltak az asztal körül és azon tanakodtak, vajon mese lett volna az egész? Vágyálom? De hiszen ott volt a csupor liszt, a két tojás, az öt szem dió meg a kis cipó. És mintha aranyból lett volna, ott ragyogott az ajándékok-ajándéka, az egy doboz gyufa. Vagy talán csak a könnyeken keresztül tűnt fel olyan fénylőnek? Ki tudja? A mesékben minden lehetséges.

*Az eredeti cikk az Amerikai Magyar Népszava 1988 december 23-i számában jelent meg.*

## Ha nem lennék idegen ... *Bujdosó Bálint – Meskó Lajos, Sch.P*

Lobog a láng a „fire-place”-en körötte ül a víg család.  
Én csöndesen merengve nézem, s értem, nem értem zsvajját.  
Ha nem lennék most idegen, hogy itthon tudnék lenni velük, vígságuk egy, és vágyuk, vérük s majdnem testvéreim nekem.

Kinn Nap ragyog a kristályhóban, fagyos gyöngyökkel telt az ág....  
Minden oly halk és minden jól van, s most fáj ugye, hogy nem hazád?  
Ha nem lennél most idegen, sok régi boldog emlék kelne, s karácsonyokról énekelve szent béke nőne szíveden.

A hólepett, elhalkult utcán lesnéd a szánkák mély nyomát, s a ródlizókat friss hóbuckán; mert ott nem voltál vén s nomád.  
Város se lenne idegen; Tudnád, ki élt ott. Minden szöglet, hol ifjú voltál, oly örök lett, mint csillagok az egeken.

Szeretni tudnád ezt a füstös, ezt a fullasztó nagy várost...  
A tava, lásd, mily szép ezüstös, s a messzi éggel határos,  
Ha nem lennél most idegen, tiéd lehetne mind e béke, tavaszok, őszök szövetsége, mint ott, a Pandur-szigeten.

Lobog a láng a „fire-place”-en....  
Ősök fényképe, nagy család...  
Beissza mind két fáradt, vén szem, s fölöttük messze-messze lát.  
Ha nem lenne most idegen, hogy övé volna múlt, jelen s e tűzhely...  
De más kép, más múlt, mint kopóhad úz fel, hogy ne légy otthon soha idelenn...  
(1962. március 3.)

*Fr. Meskó was born in 1911 and died in 2008. He left Hungary in 1945 and eventually made it to the U.S. where he taught at the Devon (PA) Boys' Prep School established by the Order in 1956. He published several volumes of poetry. This poem is taken from "Rovás a romokon" (Rovás on the Ruins), published in 1987 in Boardman, Ohio. (Rovás is the official name of the traditional carved writing employed by the ancient Hungarians, described by Chinese historians as early as the 6<sup>th</sup> century.)*

# Another "Hungarian" Christmas Tree at Rockefeller Center

*For the third time in recent memory, the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree has been provided by a Hungarian. This year's was donated by Joe Balku, of Mount Olive, NJ, who left Hungary in 1956 without anything to his name.*

For the third time in recent memory, the Rockefeller Christmas tree has been provided by a Hungarian. In 2007, a Norway Spruce was donated by Joseph and Judith Rivnyak, of Shelton, CT. In 2008, the Norway Spruce came from Bob Varanyak in Hamilton, NJ. This year's was donated by Joe Balku, of Mount Olive, NJ, who left Hungary in 1956, at age 20, and arrived in the United States without money, not knowing any English, and without any relatives or friends here. Joe said in an interview, "I dreamed the American dream, and I succeeded." He served in the American military, and eventually became the owner of a gas station.

The tree is an 80-foot Norway Spruce, weighs 10 tons and is 50 feet in diameter. Several weeks previous to Superstorm Sandy, he learned that his tree had been chosen, so he was rather nervous the night Sandy struck. While he lost electricity as well as an oak tree and an evergreen, the Norway Spruce survived Sandy's 70 mph winds. It was tied down and its branches were wrapped in preparation for cutting it down and moving it, but he kept going outside that night to make sure it was still there.

When Joe Balku purchased his home in 1973, the tree was about 22 feet tall. He estimates that it may have been planted between 1960 and 1964. Its branches are evenly spaced, which makes it suitable for the 45,000 lights strung on it. The tree was lit November 28<sup>th</sup>, and topped with a Swarovski crystal star. It is called "Olive", after its native place.

Joe, now 76 years old, had never been to the Christmas tree lighting ceremony at Rockefeller Center, but made sure to attend this year, the 80<sup>th</sup> time New York ushered in the season this way.



## Poetry of Hungary

*Erika Papp Faber*

*The first shipment of "A Sampler of Hungarian Poetry" (delayed by Hurricane Sandy) has now arrived, just in time for Christmas. It is an anthology of 61 poems by 21 poets, translated by Erika Papp Faber. Each translation faces the original for easier comparison, and there are biographies of each poet (in English). The portraits were sketched by Csilla Somogyi. (Check the end of the article for ordering information).*

*This then seems an appropriate time to present an introduction to Hungarian poetry*

Poetry for Hungarians is more than just a pleasant pastime; it is a part of their history. It records who they are, who they were, it is part of their collective psyche.

Hungary is a nation of poets. During the last 150 years alone, the writings of over 170 well-known poets have found their way into anthologies. This figure is all the more impressive when we consider that at no time has the population of Hungary exceeded 14 million!

EPF What makes Hungarians so prone to

poetry? Partly their temperament; they have a romantic streak paralleled perhaps only by the Irish. It may be due in part to their language: Hungarian grammar is built upon the foundation of vowel harmony, which lends the language a musical quality and makes it well suited to poetry. And it may lie partly in their geography, which has placed them at the crossroads of East and West and has thus provided poetic inspiration.

Folksongs and epics were the ancient origins of Hungarian poetry. The earliest extant Hungarian poem is "Mary's Lament" ("Ómagyar Mária-siralom"), dating from around 1300. It is impossible to determine what written Hungarian poetry may have existed before that date, since the Mongolian invasion of 1241-42 caused such devastation in the land that the reigning king, Béla IV, had to start from scratch, and is known as the second founder of Hungary. (To give you an idea: before the Mongolian invasion, the county of Somogy had 50,000 inhabitants. One year later, after they left, there was a grand total of 50 – fifty! – people left in the county.)

Hungarian translations from Latin poems showed up in Late Medieval codices. One outstanding example is the Legend of St. Catherine from the Érsékújvár Codex, with paired rhymes. The humanist Janus Pannonius (1434-1472), who studied in Italy, still wrote his epigrams in Latin. Original Hungarian poetry appeared in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, but following the disastrous battle of Mohács (1526), the 160-year Turkish occupation began. The country was divided into three areas of control, and the struggle for national survival understandably limited literary activity. The Hapsburgs came to rule in the west and north, the Turks controlled the center of the country, and the area of Transylvania remained independent, but was under constant attack, for 150 years, after which it too came under Hapsburg rule. Wandering minstrels (e.g. Sebestyén Tinódi Lantos) played more of a reportorial role, describing battle scenes. Soldier-poets of the border outposts,

such as Bálint Balassi, and Miklós Zrinyi, could write in the wintertime when the weather temporarily halted fighting, and they left us lyrical and epic pieces, centered mostly on military and patriotic topics (and to a lesser degree, on love). For example, an epic by Miklós Zrinyi presents the Turks as God's punishment. It portrays the clash between Christian Hungarians and Muslim Turks, between Zrinyi's great-grandfather (a historic figure known as the Hero of Szigetvár), the champion of Christ, and paganism and discord. God's punishment lasts three or four generations, but now, he urges, it is time to get rid of the Turkish yoke.

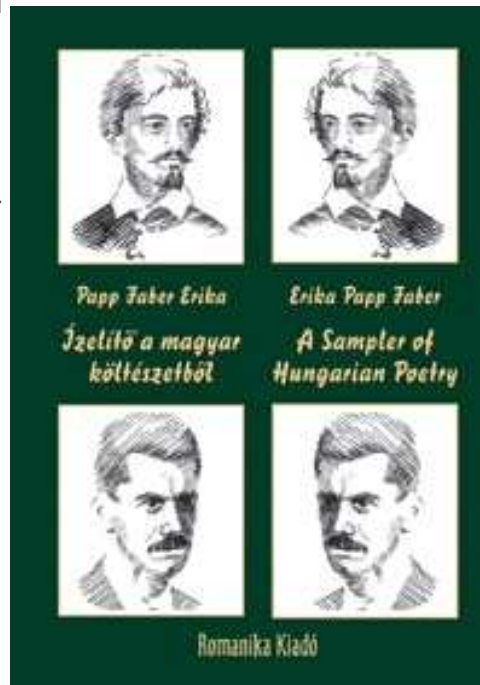
At the same time, the Protestant Reformation brought with it a demand for use of the vernacular in religious services and in the Bible. Protestant preachers interwove free translations of the psalms with patriotic anguish over Turkish and Austrian domination. They played a major role in the development of all branches of Hungarian literature.

Hapsburg rule of Hungary in the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries gave rise to "kuruc" literature and folksongs. The word "kuruc" is a corruption of the Latin "crux", as these patriots considered themselves a new type of crusader, fighting foreign oppression. Initially, they were a rag-tag militia of former soldiers, impoverished members of the lower nobility, and townsfolk, who had taken part in Thököly's revolt (and later in the unsuccessful freedom fight led by Ferenc Rákóczi II – 1703-1711). Their officers had been trained in the Hapsburg army, and also came from the nobility.

Most of *kuruc* literature is anonymous, but the contents suggest Protestant preachers as the authors. The anti-Hungarian policies of the Catholic Hapsburgs, pillage by foreign mercenaries, the bloody massacres of military tribunals, and the sending of Protestant preachers to the galleys (1675), all fueled nationalist and anti-Catholic sentiments. Late *kuruc* literature consists mostly of laments.

From the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> to the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century can be

called the age of Hungarian literary renewal. Emperor Joseph II (1780-1790) had imposed German as the official language of the country. This naturally sparked a reaction, leading to a movement for language reform. Its main concern was to develop, from the existing Hungarian language, new words to cover new concepts, to be able to avoid using foreign terms. Through this effort, the language used by poets also became richer and more refined.



In 1825, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences was established, and one of its aims was fostering the language arts. The center of literary life was moved to Pest (Buda and Pest were united only in 1867), and literary magazines flourished. The best writers were gathered into the Kisfaludy Society (which, by offering prizes, brought new talents to the literary scene), and the Aurora Circle, the gathering of young writers, who were drawn to write national epics, and to use a popular, folksong style. In this they paved the way for Sándor Petőfi (1823-1849), the folksy, lyric poet of Hungarian freedom, whose recital of his "Talpra, magyar!" ("Up, up, Magyar!") set off the Hungarian Fight for Freedom of 1848-49. Because Hungary was still under the domination of Austria, much Hungarian poetry of the

mid-nineteenth century was nationalistic and freedom-seeking.

Some of the greatest Hungarian poets – Mihály Vörösmarty (epics, narrative poems, dramas, lyric poems); János Arany (ballads, essays, literary historic studies, lyric poems); Imre Madách ("The Tragedy of Man") – were products of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Following the crushing of the 1848-49 Freedom Fight, they also wrote allegorical works (to escape the censor's wrath and drastic punishment), describing the numbness that settled upon the country. There was some loosening of the political oppression in 1867, with the Compromise of that year, which established the Dual Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

The turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought the celebration of Hungary's millennium as a Christian nation. Problems – economic, social, political – were buried in a haze of national euphoria. Endre Ady was foremost among those who pointed out these problems, but out of a genuine love for the people, and promised: "It will be different tomorrow!"

After the assassination of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, the Hungarian delegate to the Crown Council was the only one who opposed going to war with Serbia. He was overruled, and Hungary was embroiled in a war it neither provoked nor wanted. The poet Géza Gyóni was among those sent to the front, and his poems held up a mirror to the greed of war profiteers (see "Csak egy éjszakára" – "For Just a Single Night").

The dictated Treaty of Trianon (1920) deprived Hungary of two-thirds of its territory, 3.5 million of its citizens, half its agricultural land, most of its natural resources. In addition, tens of thousands of refugees poured into truncated Hungary, giving rise to the slogans "Justice for Hungary!" and "No! No! Never!", meaning that Hungary would never accept this travesty.

On the literary front, this gave rise to a whole series of "irredentist" poets, writers who demanded a return of the lands torn from the country. They included "Végvári", pseudonym for Sán-

dor Reményik; György Csanádi, author of the modern national anthem of Transylvania; Lajos Áprily, et al. Literary life flourished between the two World Wars, despite the shrunken size of Hungary. István Sinka, a shepherd on the Hungarian Plain; Attila József, whose father had emigrated to America and never returned; Gyula Juhász, the teacher who suffered from serious depression; Mihály Babits; László Mécs – these are just some of the outstanding poets of the time.

With the Russian occupation of Hungary in 1945, a new era of oppression began. The Communist takeover of 1948 brought in the "dictatorship of the proletariat", with its typical show trials and prison terms and executions. But even in the prisons, many poets managed to put beautiful thoughts on scraps of paper. Some of those scraps survived, and were eventually published in a volume entitled "Füveskert", translated as "From the Hungarian Revolution."

Hungarian poetry is "rich and deep in sentiments, universal in its humanity, God-fearing in depth." \* Translations try to open a window on this world of inspiration, whose language roots have been traced back thousands of years, even to the Sumerians. Many of the most important authors (Petőfi, Ady and Babits), have been translated into English, German, French, Italian, etc. (This article was originally published in the May-June 2012 issue of St. Austin Review) [www.staustinreview.com](http://www.staustinreview.com)  
\*Rev. István N. Mustos, Sch.P., in Foreword to "A Sampler of Hungarian Poetry" by Erika Papp Faber. The anthology was awarded a gold medal by the Hungarian Association of Cleveland in 2004.

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## Magyar cserkész-csapat alakul Wallingfordban!

*Dömötör Gábor*

*A new Hungarian Scout Troop is being organized in Wallingford, CT. You are welcome to bring your Hungarian speaking children or grandchildren. For further information, read on...*

Örömmel közöljük, hogy magyar cserkészcsapat van alakulóban Wallingfordban. Már megvolt az igen jól sikerült első gyűlés, amelyen 16-an vettek részt: 11 gyerek, akik cserkészek szeretnének lenni és több képzett cserkészvezető. A csapatot Gál András vezeti feleségével, Emesével. Az első gyűlésen három vendég-cserkész is részt vett: Dr. Fogarasi Miklós, a bostoni cserkészcsapat parancsnoka, Závodszy Zsolt felnőtt cserkész és Fogarasi Domos, a bostoni csapat cserkésze. A gyerekek nagyon élvezték a mozgalmas, sok érdekes foglalkozást tartalmazó első gyűlést. A kezdeti időkből a cserkészfoglalkozás minden második vasárnap kora délután, 1:30-tól 3:30-ig lesz, a wallingfordi magyar iskola tanításának befejezése után. A következő foglalkozás december 9-én lesz. A Wallingfordi Magyar Klub ad otthont és támogatást a csapatnak. Az alakuló csapat szeretettel vár további jelentkezőket: 5 éven feletti, magyarul tudó fiúkat és lányokat. Mint tudjuk, több száz magyar cserkész működik a környéken, a bostoni, New York-i, garfieldi és New Brunswick-i cserkészcsapatokban. Ezekhez – és a Külföldi Magyar Cserkészszövetség több, mint 70 csapatához - csatlakozik most az új connecticuti csapat.

Érdeklődni lehet Gál Andrásnál: (216) 469-6513, [gallat1@gmail.com](mailto:gallat1@gmail.com)

*Dömötör Gábor a Külföldi Magyar Cserkészszövetség alelnöke és Intézőbizottságának elnöke*

**A Hungarian Scout Troop has started activities in Wallingford!**

We are glad to report that a Hungarian Scout troop was started in Wallingford. Sixteen participants were at the first

meeting: 11 children who would like to be scouts and several trained Scout leaders. The new troop is led by Andrew Gál and his wife, Emese. Three guest-Scouts were at the first meeting: Dr. Miklós Fogarasi, Scoutmaster of the Boston troop, Zsolt Závodszy, previously from the Pennsylvania troop, and Domos Fogarasi, member of the Boston troop. The first meeting was a resounding success: the children evidently enjoyed the active program. At the beginning, the meetings will be held in the early afternoon of every second Sunday, from 1:30 to 3:30 pm, starting after the end of classes at the Hungarian School. The meetings will be at the Wallingford Hungarian Club. The next meeting will be held on December 9th. The troop welcomes new applicants: Hungarian-speaking boys and girls above the age of 5 years. As is well known, several hundred Hungarian Scouts are active in the neighboring troops of Boston, New York, Garfield and New Brunswick. These – and the other 70 plus troops of the Hungarian Scout Association – will now be joined by the new Connecticut troop. For further information, please contact Andrew Gál: (216) 469-6513, [gallat1@gmail.com](mailto:gallat1@gmail.com)

*Gábor Dömötör is Chairman of the Board and Vice President of the Hungarian Scout Association in Exeter*

### Magyar News Online

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# Christmas Eve Menu

## Karácsonyi káposzta leves

Savanyú káposztát – ha van füstölt lés – puhára főzzük.

A rántás elkészítéséhez türelem kell. Lassan pirosra, egész sötétre piritjuk, s a végén 1-2 evőkanál kristály cukrot dobunk bele. Mikor ez is megpirult, kis fűszerpaprika bedobása után akkor eresztjük föl, jó sok vízzel.

A hagymát jó bőven vagy a rántásban hervasztjuk meg, vagy az aprított gombával, amit a végén szintén bele főzünk.

Ebből se maradjanak ki a kolbászkarikák.

Tálaláshoz adjunk tejfölt is bőven. (taken from „Bornemissza Anna szakácskönyve“)

## Christmas Cabbage Soup

Cook sauerkraut – if there is any smoked meat stock – until it's soft. Patience is required for preparing the roux. Brown it slowly, until it is quite dark, and throw in 1-2 tablespoons of sugar at the end. When that too has browned, throw in some seasoning paprika and then dilute with lots of water.

The onion is to be sautéed (“wilted”) either in the roux, or together with diced mushrooms, which we also cook with it.

Slices of *kolbász* must not be missing from this.

Provide plenty of sour cream when serving.

## Christmas Eve Fish

Since I grew up in Budapest, I never knew the special Christmas treats of the various regions of Hungary.

We enjoyed breaded, fried filet of carp with mashed potatoes and a wine cream sauce called *borsodó*. Mashed potatoes were partially a safety measure for eventual bones found in the fish.

The dessert was invariably and inevitably *beigli*, the ubiquitous holiday item subject to an ongoing competition among housewives.

In America, I wanted to keep up the Hungarian traditions as much as possible.

But with children, one full-time and two part-time jobs for both my husband and myself, I had to cut corners when it came to food preparation. (Better than on the road, driving...) Thus my children grew up mostly on food from boxes, like Mrs. Paul's fish filets (no bones ever!), instant mashed potatoes and egg-nog with white wine for a tasty sauce...

Small wonder my daughter was the only kid in college who loved cafeteria food!

*Olga Vállay Szokolay*

## Mákos guba vagy bobajka

Az északi hegyvidék, és a mai Szlovákia környékéről eredt ez a könnyen és hamar készíthető édesség. A mákos guba eredetileg karácsonyi szerencsehozó édesség volt: úgy tartották, a sok apró mákszem pénzt hoz a házhoz az új évben.

Amikor már az őszi betakarítás megvan, és az esték hosszúak, nekiállok kis pogácsákat sütni. Egy fél csésze langyos tejben kis cukorral felfuttatok egy kis élesztőt. Egy fél kiló lisztben eldörzsölöm az 5-8 deka zsírt, vagy vaját, és negyed csésze cukrot. Hozzáadom a sót, a felfuttatott élesztőt meg 2 tojás sárgáját. Jó kis gyenge tésztát csinállok belőle. Melegen duplájára keleszttem. Akkor két kis hengerfélét csinállok belőle, aztán azokat kis korongokra szelem. Ezeket kizsírított tepsibe rakom, megint hagyom fél óráig kelni, aztán szép pirosra sütöm. Meg is fordítom, hogy mindegyik oldala szépre süljön. Mikor kihűlt, akkor ezeket kis zacskóba teszem, a száját jól bekötöm hogy por-bogár bele ne menjen, aztán a padlásra a gerendára felakasztom. Ez ott jól kiszárad, hetekig, hónapokig is ott lóghat. Így mindig készen van, ha váratlan vendég jön, vagy pedig karácsony estére.

Ha hirtelen édességre van szükség, akkor fél liter tejet felmelegítek. Három tojás sárgáját kikeverem 8-10 deka cukorral, és a tejhez adom. Nem kell hogy felfőjjön! Bele keverem a vaniliás cukrot is.

Vagy 15 deka darált mákot elkeverem a porcukorral.

Kizsírítom a tepsit, a kis pogácsákat



sorba belerakom.

Meglocsolom a tejes keverékkel, és rászórom a mákot. Így rakom tovább, amíg el nem fogy. Meleg sütőbe teszem, vagy 25 percig sütöm. Mézzel, baracklekvárral vagy vaníliaasodóval tálalom.

## Borsodó:

2 dl fehérbort 1 dl vízzel, 2 egész tojással, fél citrom reszelt héjjával, 10 dg cukorral és 1 kiskanál liszttel hidegen elkeverjük. Gőz felett habzásig verjük. Melegen tálaljuk.

## Vaniliásodó:

3 dl tejet, 2 tojássárgával jól kikeverjük. Hozzáadunk 10 dg cukrot és 1 púpozott kanál lisztet. Gőz felett habzásig verjük. A tojásfehérjét kemény habbá verjük, azt és egy csomag vaniliás cukrot is hozzákeverjük.

*Pillerné Tima Eszti*

# Our Visit from Mikulás

Judit Vasmatyics Paolini

*Living in Hungary during the 1950's, our family experienced great poverty. Our humble home contained only two rooms — a kitchen and a room used for playing as well as sleeping. In bad weather we played inside wherever we could, for there was no living room or a special play room. We were a family of seven with merely enough to eat and at times not even that! Despite all this, holidays brought us great joy.*



I especially recall a time when I was oh so very young and eagerly awaited *Mikulás* (St. Nicholas). Mom asked us to shine our shoes before placing them on the window sill for *Mikulás* to find. This was the custom in Hungary on December 5th, the eve of St. Nicholas' s Day. *Mikulás* (Szent Miklós) came during the night, filling them with candy and chocolate. Good children received delicious treats including nuts and even small presents! Naughty children received none of these. Instead, they were given coal or *virgács* (switch). However, *kram-*

*pusz* (little devil) traveled with *Mikulás*. All children feared *krampusz* and dreaded a visit from him, for he took away bad children!

My shoes were so worn and scuffed! I cried that it was useless for me to clean them. However, Mom would not hear it. Rose and Michael had already placed their freshly polished shoes on the window sill. Mom finished buffing Kati's and Miki's who were too young to do their own. Placing the tiny, little shoes on the ledge, she expected me to quickly do the same which I did. Shortly after dinner, Kati and Miki were fast asleep. However, Michael, Rose and I were allowed to stay up past our bedtime. We played quietly in the kitchen and waited with great anticipation. Hearing a knock at the door, Dad opened it but didn't find what we expected. Instead, *Mária Néni*, Kati, Panni and Sziszi were standing there, eager to come in and get out of the bitter cold. Our adoring aunts and uncle came to visit. Shortly after, the adults were especially jovial, sipping espresso and engaged in pleasant conversation.

The toddlers slept in the other room so the lights were turned off with the door only slightly ajar. It was pitch black in there so we didn't dare peep in to see if *Mikulás* had come. We repeatedly begged Mom and Dad to take a look, but they always refused. We pleaded with our aunts and uncle, but they wouldn't budge. *Mária Néni* teased that the *gyerekek* (children) were too scared to enter and would surely wet their pants if they did! The others chuckled and chimed in agreement. However, the *gyerekek* didn't see any humor in it at all!

We were impressionably young; of course, we were *petrified* to enter that dark room. The oldest among us was only eight, possibly less. We all believed the story of *krampusz* and wanted to avoid meeting him. No child wanted to be snatched away!

In those days, my parents struggled to provide enough food for our table. Sweets were expensive and truly a special treat. The wait was so agonizing. We weren't perfect; I knew that. Despite our tender age my brothers, sisters, and I certainly had our share of disagreements. Nonetheless, we

understood our parents' expectations and most often obeyed them. Thus, I anxiously hoped we were good enough and worthy of being rewarded.

Finally, I found the wait just too exasperating. Somehow, I mustered the courage to peek in. Then I quickly scurried back to the kitchen where I proudly announced, "I didn't wet my pants! I didn't wet my pants!" The adults laughed and laughed as they inquired, "*És jött a Mikulás?*" (And did *Mikulás* come?) He surely did! We were elated. Each pair of shiny shoes was filled with scrumptious candy and yummy chocolate.

Fleeing Hungary in 1956, we eventually settled in the United States. In time, like many others who left their homeland, we no longer observed this holiday. Recently, in 2010, my husband George and I arrived in Munich on December 5th for an excursion of the Christmas markets in Bavaria. Our tour director, Bridget greeted everyone with a small gift of sweets beautifully wrapped in a red ball. She cheerfully exclaimed that the following day was a special holiday not only in Germany but in several European countries. Naming some, she included Hungary among them, as I hoped she would.

The last time I was in Europe on St. Nicholas Day was in 1956, when I was a little girl at a refugee camp in Linz, Austria; but I have no recollections of his visit that year. To be in Europe now was truly exhilarating, I looked forward to what lay ahead with great expectations.

The next day, after the city tour, we headed straight for the Christmas market at the magnificent Marienplatz. George and I strolled leisurely stopping at booth after booth, always discovering something new and wonderfully different. There were so many pleasures vying for our attention — the beauty of the city, exquisitely handcrafted items, regional foods which one goes to great lengths to find here, and savory sweets which included *mézeskalács* (honey-cake, gingerbread) with sugary decorations and inscriptions. *Mézeskalács* was among the items I had hoped to find during this trip. However, though the

selection was large and tempting, I managed to forego purchasing one since none were inscribed in Hungarian.

The square was filled with so many people — locals and tourists from far and near. Everyone was in a very festive mood. Meandering along, I caught glimpses of hearty young men and women in their late teens or early twenties having fun with their friends. Some dressed as a *krampusz* and others I wrongly perceived as a priest. I aimlessly searched and searched for St. Nicholas, but he was not to be seen. I was bewildered. After all, it was the Feast of St. Nicholas. Surely, he was among those dressed in disguise, but where? I was determined to find him.

Realizing that it was pointless, I ceased looking for a jolly old man dressed like Santa Claus with whom I was so familiar. Instead, I intently gazed upon the people wearing costumes for *some* of them had to be St. Nicholas. Then I observed one man disguised like a priest carrying a tall, wooden stick which enabled me to surmise it represented a *bishop's staff*. His attire made sense now, for St. Nicholas had been a most generous bishop! The costume was that of a bishop! Yes, I was able to comprehend that he was the gift giver! Needing a respite, George and I entered a *Konditorei* (confectionery shop). Though we were seated at a small table barely enough for two, the hot cup of cappuccino was most refreshing. Looking around the room, I spied a few children's boots filled with cookies and chocolate neatly wrapped in cellophane. Upon seeing those boots, I was truly touched and became a little teary eyed for they evoked precious memories from my childhood when *Mikulás* visited our humble home and rewarded us with scrumptious sweets and yummy chocolate.

*Judit Vasmatics Paolini is a former lecturer at Tunxis Community College, a member of the Southern Connecticut State University Alumni Board of Directors, and is a member of the Magyar News Online Editorial Board.*

## The Health Benefits of Mák (Poppy Seeds)



Years ago, an entire 19<sup>th</sup> century cemetery in the Csallóköz area had to be exhumed, for moving to the other end of the village. In the process, it was noted that the bones were

in perfect condition, so much so, that a scientific study was initiated to discover the reason. The scientists found that *mák* – poppy seeds – was the main product of the local population, and that they ate *mák* three to five times a week. Over 50 poppy seed recipes were collected in the area, including *mákos kalács* (poppy seed cake) which was always offered to guests.

Poppy seeds contain great amounts of calcium, iron (which gives it its black color) and folic acid. All of these are necessary for healthy bones. In addition, poppy seed oil has a high phosphorus content, which aids in the absorption of calcium into the bones. People in the 19<sup>th</sup> century did not eat much red meat, and used honey rather than sugar as a sweetener

A naturopath, Schirilla György, who conducted the above study, then developed a simple preventative for osteoporosis: grind 25 dkg (approx..12 oz.) of poppy seeds. Add a small amount of water, and sweeten with enough honey to give



*Poppy capsule*

it a pleasant taste. Bring to a boil, but only to the jar. Take one tablespoon a day, preferably with breakfast. Just one word of advice: *Mák* stays in your system for several days, and will show up in a drug test!

EPF

## Kicsi a világ...

*Éva Apor Bálintt*

In late January 1957, in a refugee camp near Salzburg, Austria, my husband Charlie and I were accommodated in an eight-person compartment with two bunk-beds. Our immediate neighbors were Éva (nicknamed Smart Sussie) and Sándor Cserni (Czerny?). We chatted a lot. Once Argentina came up in the conversation.

I mentioned that I had three half-siblings in Buenos Aires. Sussie's eyes sparkled as she said that her little son was also living there. Soon it turned out that he was being raised by my half-sister, Klára, who was then the second wife of the boy's father ! It really IS a small world!

### Did you know...

...that there are seven localities where it's Christmas every day?

They are: Mikekarácsonyfa (in Zala County, composed of Mikefalva and Karácsonyfalva, joined into one in 1941. The suffix "*falva*", village, was shortened to "*fa*" – tree – at that time.)

Nagykarácsony, near Dunaujváros

Alsókarácsonyfalva

Felsőkarácsonyfalva

Homoródkarácsonyfalva

Nyárádkarácson

Tiszakarácsonyfalva

... and the last five are found in Transylvania.

(Karácsond, located in Heves County, is not derived from „karácsony”, but presumably from the name of Ond vezér.)

# Szilveszteri kram- pampuli

Szakál László

*Looking into the bluish flame of krampampuli on New Year's Eve is a pleasant and interesting pastime. The burning rum, the dissolving sugar, the aroma of the many spices fills the room. In the already heightened mood of the turning year, the company sitting around the table is looking for an indication of the future in the flame flickering in the middle of the table.*

*A krampampuli kékes lángjába tekinteni Szilveszter éjszakaiján a kellemes és érdekes dolgok közé tartozik. Az égő rum, az olvadó cukor, a sokféle fűszer illata betölti a szobát. A forduló év amúgy is felfokozott hangulatában, az asztal körül ülő társaság a jövő képét keresi az asztal közepén imbolygó lángban.*



Talán vannak, akik azt mondják, hogy a modern italok divatjának idején a puncsfélék elvesztették a jelentőségüket Szilveszter éjjelén. De bármennyire kedveljük is a koktélokat, Szilveszterkor mégis illő helyet adnunk a puncsnak, mégpedig

## Krampampuli Crambambuli, das ist der Titel

Kram - pau - pu - li, mi így ne - vez - zük az  
i - tó - kát, mely jól be - vált. Mi ki - pró -  
bált szer - nek is - mer - jük, ha bár - kit bí vagy bá - nat  
bánt. Miut al - ta - tó vagy reg - ge - li, jó  
egy po - háár kram - pa - pu - li, kram - pam - pam -  
pam - pu - li, kram - pam - pu - li. Mut li.

elsősorban az égetettnek, azaz a krampampulinak. Midőn közeledik az éjféli, hatalmas, öblös tűzálló tálal állítunk az asztal közepére, és az aljára rakunk vagdalt déli-gyümölcsöt: fűgét, kimagozott datolyát, mazsolát, cukrozott narancshéjat, esetleg darabokra tördelt szentjánoskenyeret, továbbá dióval bélelt aszalt szilvát és (esetleg egyéb hiányzó anyagok pótlására is) másféle hazai cukrozott gyümölcsöt is. A tál tetejére helyezett rostélyt megrakjuk kockacukorral (ezt esetleg előbb narancshéjjal is végigdörzsöljük), majd meglocsoljuk egy fél liter finom rummal. Meggyújtjuk (ilyenkor a lámpákat elolthatjuk), s türelemmel figyeljük, amíg a lángoló szesz kiég, s a felolvadt cukor a tálba csepeg. Mikor ez a processzus befejeződött, utánaöntünk két liter felforralt, fűszeres (fahéj, citromhéj, szegfűszeg)

fehér bort, egy liter forró teát, 2 citrom és 2 narancs vagy más gyümölcs levét. Néhány percig állni hagyjuk, de vigyázzunk, hogy ki ne hűljön. Jól megkeverjük, s megkóstoljuk, nincs-e híja valmilyen irányban. Elég erős-e, elég édes-e, vagy ellenkezőleg túl erős, túl édes-e? Ha kell segítünk a bajon, s azután puncsos poharakba szűrjük a párolgó italt, és ezzel kívánunk egymásnak sikerekben gazdag új esztendő!





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