



The Urban Space Through the Eyes of Women: The 1849 Siege of Buda in Women's Ego-documents*

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This study examines how female city dwellers experienced the siege of Buda Castle, a crucial event of the Revolution and War of Independence of 1848–1849, and the image of the city in their writings. The analysis focuses on three women's ego-documents: the autobiography of Emília Kánya, the first female editor in the Habsburg Empire, the letters written by a young actress, Lilla Bulyovszky, to her husband and a letter by Anna Glasz, a resident of Buda Castle. I explore the kinds of mental map that emerge in the ego-documents in which the authors reflect on the urban experiences during the siege and the emotions that dominate their writings.

Keywords: Revolution and War of Independence of 1848–1849, urban history, female use of space, city representations

In her 1903 autobiography, Emília Kánya, writing in Fiume, offers the following recollections of the bombardment of Pest in 1849:

Back in the first half of May—I don't know the exact date when—Hentzi, the governor of Buda Castle, began to besiege our beautiful young city. I was a very ignorant and gullible little woman, and so I didn't even think that this would turn into a siege of Pest, but with my childish mind I believed that these bullets were just misdirected shots sent from Svábhegy to Buda Castle by our soldiers and that they were just whistling in front of our windows in Zrínyi Street by chance. But then I was informed: this is the siege of Pest, a soulless, cruel siege, a testimony to the mindless and heartless fury that Hentzi wanted to unleash on the innocent capital. It was an ignoble revenge for the many defeats the Austrian army had suffered at the hands of our lads lately.¹

Although the Revolution and War of Independence of 1848–1849 has long been a focus of study as one of the most important topics of Hungarian

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1 Kánya, *Réges-régi időkeről*, 107.

historiography, the history of women's experience in the event has so far been relegated to the background. Apart from the biographies of a few prominent female figures (such as Mária Lebstück, who fought in men's uniform and was appointed lieutenant, and Lajos Kossuth's sister, Zsuzsanna Kossuth, who is regarded as the first Hungarian nurse),² this question has hardly been addressed, although many surviving ego-documents would allow us to examine it. While there have been studies on the involvement of women in public affairs, the first efforts to gain women's suffrage, or the manifesto "To Patriots!" demanding equality for women, written in April 1848 by Blanka Teleki, head of the famous girls' school in Pest,³ individual stories, the private sphere, and everyday experiences remain almost entirely unexplored. The literature on the relationship between the 1848 revolutions and women is also characterized by a focus on issues in the public sphere, such as women's emancipation, and how these issues were reflected in the writings of the women writers of the time.⁴

There is also a lack of fundamental research on how female city dwellers saw Pest-Buda⁵ in the mid-nineteenth century and how their writings reflected on their uses of urban space.⁶ In my study, I link these two issues through an analysis of three women's ego-documents. I look first at the autobiography of Emília Kánya, quoted above. I then consider the letters sent by Lilla Bulyovszky, an actress working at the National Theatre, to her husband. I conclude with an examination of a letter by Anna Glasz, a resident of Buda Castle, which Glasz wrote over the course of several weeks during the siege, thus transforming it into a kind of diary, even if it remained addressed to someone else. I will analyze, on the basis of these sources, how these women experienced the siege of Buda Castle, a crucial event of the Revolution and War of Independence. I

2 Deák, "Ha nő kezében a zászló," 100–6; Kapronczay, "Kossuth Zsuzsanna, az első magyar főápolónő tevékenysége a szabadságharc idején."

3 See, e.g., Nemes, "Women in the 1848–1849 Hungarian Revolution"; N. Szegvári, "Út a nők egyenjogúságához"; Zimmermann, "Ne így, hazám hölgyei!"; Zimmermann, *Die bessere Hälfte?*, 19–22.

4 See, e.g., Walton, "Writing the 1848 Revolution"; Boetcher Joeres, "1848 from a Distance: German Women Writers on the Revolution."

5 Budapest was not established until 1873, with the merging of Pest, Buda, and Óbuda, each of which had been an independent town until then. Regarding the urban history of the period preceding that date, several names are used. Most Hungarian historians use "Pest-Buda," which I also keep in this study when referring to the twin cities in the Age of Reform. (Robert Nemes used "Buda-Pest," which is also found in works by many Hungarian, German, and English authors from the 1830s onwards. Nemes, *The Once and Future Budapest*, 10.)

6 On the mental map of city dwellers of Budapest at the end of nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, see, e.g., Gyáni, *Identity and the Urban Experience: Fin de Siècle Budapest*.

also consider the image of the city in their writings, that is, how they create an impression of the war-struck city while recording their experiences.

The concept of the mental map is linked to the name of urban planner Kevin Lynch, who studied the interaction between the urban environment and the individuals living in the city. In his iconic book *The Image of the City*, he studied American cities (Boston, Jersey City, and Los Angeles) on the basis of the mental maps of their inhabitants.⁷ He distinguished five defining elements of the urban image (paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks). The first category includes paths, streets, and promenades, that is, the transport channels that a city dweller follows, the second includes major borderlines (edges), and the third includes quarters or areas (districts).⁸ The fourth category is made up of important junctions (nodes), which can be strategic places, as they can be the centers of life in a neighborhood, and the fifth category consists of major mileposts and signposts (landmarks), which are external reference points that help orientation (mostly physical objects that are easy to identify and that are highlighted in a given context because of their specificity).

I focus primarily on the ways in which the authors of the aforementioned sources write about nodes and districts, as their narratives offer examples of the ways in which urban spaces were put to new uses by inhabitants of the city during the extraordinary circumstances of the siege of Buda in May 1849. I seek to identify the kinds of mental maps that emerge from the reflections in these ego-documents on the urban experiences during the siege. I also explore, on the basis of comments made in the three ego-documents, the ways in which the social status of the people fleeing the siege influenced their choices (and by implication, options) of mode and route of flight, and I consider the emotional tones of the three narratives of the events.

In recent decades, approaches to analyzing ego-documents have changed radically. With the foregrounding of the lives of common people and the increasing presence in the secondary literature of the perspectives of microhistory and *Alltagsgeschichte*, analyses of individual experiences and motivations have become more and more important in historiography.⁹ Since the 1960s, the term “experience” has become a key concept in social history, incorporating the processes by which individuals attribute meaning to and thereby essentially

7 Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 2.

8 *Ibid.*, 46–90.

9 Kővér, *Biográfia és társadalomtörténet*, 65–96; Gyáni, “Az ego-dokumentumok történetírói haszna.”

construct the events they experience.¹⁰ The case studies and the selected sources presented in this inquiry represent diverse modes of such meaning-making. Thus, they offer examples of how interpretations of events and perceptions of the city were influenced by the genre of the ego-document in question and the worldview of its author.

The Siege

The siege of Buda Castle from May 4 to 21 was an important stage in the 1848–1849 Revolution and War of Independence. Pest-Buda had been occupied on January 5, 1849 by the imperial commander-in-chief, Prince Alfred zu Windisch-Grätz. The Hungarian government and parliament retreated to Debrecen in the Trans-Tisza region, where on April 14, the dethronement of the House of Habsburg-Lorraine was proclaimed and Lajos Kossuth was elected governor. After the successes of the spring campaign, the Hungarian government considered the recapture of the capital of paramount importance, both in terms of foreign policy and because of the symbolic power of the liberation of Buda.¹¹ Thus, after the victory at Komárom, one of the most important battles of the war, the Hungarian armies, led by Artúr Görgei, marched towards Buda instead of pursuing the fleeing imperial troops. This decision was criticized afterwards from both military and political points of view. In 1869, Mór Jókai reflected on this in his iconic novel, *The Baron's Sons* (*A kőszívű ember fiai*), discussing why the recapture of Buda was so vitally important to the Hungarians: “What to the Punic people was Carthage, to Israel, Jerusalem, to Christianity, the Holy Land, to the French, Paris, to the Russians, Moscow, to the Italians, Rome—it was to us Buda Castle.”

The commander of Buda Castle was Major General Heinrich Hentzi von Arthurm.¹² On May 4, Artúr Görgei demanded that he surrender the castle, and Görgei warned Hentzi to spare the Chain Bridge and the city of Pest on the left bank of the Danube. He also promised not to launch an attack from this direction.¹³ In his reply, however, Hentzi made it clear that he would not abandon the castle, and he warned that he would shell Pest.¹⁴ In the following

10 Canning, “Feminist History after the Linguistic Turn,” 376–77.

11 Hermann, “Buda bevétele, 1849. május 21.,” 97–98.

12 Hermann, “Heinrich Hentzi, a budavári Leonidász,” 34–60.

13 *Ibid.*, 55.

14 *Ibid.*

weeks, the imperial army aimed artillery fire at the beautiful row of mansions on the banks of the Danube from Buda Castle, as well as many other buildings in the downtown area and the Lipótváros (Leopoldstadt), and Terézváros (Theresienstadt) districts.¹⁵ The unified neoclassical townscape of Pest, built in the Age of Reform (1825–1848),¹⁶ was severely damaged. The only purpose of Hentzi's action was to instill fear. He had no legitimate military motives, as the castle was not under attack from the Pest side of the Danube. Given the main targets of the bombardment, Hentzi seems to have wanted to teach a lesson to the people of Pest, who had shown their devotion to the revolutionary cause. The National Theater, the Redoute (which had been home of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly in the second half of 1848), and the Hall of Commerce (in which István Széchenyi had established the National Casino) were among the buildings hit.¹⁷ Although the recapture of the capital was a great success for the Hungarian army, the inhabitants of Pest were shocked by the many deaths and injuries and the destruction of the architectural environment, which left many people homeless. Those who suffered Hentzi's bombardment saw him as "the cannibal-hearted commander of Buda Castle."¹⁸ The shock endured by the townspeople may have been exacerbated by the fact that they had not had to endure such a siege for as long as anyone could remember. The War of Independence, which began in the autumn of 1848, was the first truly significant conflict involving armed violence in the country since the end of Rákóczi's War of Independence in 1711.

The Mental Map of Contemporary City Dwellers: Urban Architecture and the Perception of the City in Pest-Buda in the Age of Reform

Before analyzing the ego-documents and presenting Kánya's, Bulyovszky's, and Glasz's experiences of the siege, it is worth providing some context by giving a description of the Age-of-Reform city that was so severely damaged by Hentzi's

15 Bácskai, "Budapest története 1686–1873," 114.

16 In Hungarian national memory, the two decades preceding the 1848–1849 Revolution and War of Independence have been labelled the "Age of Reform" since the early twentieth century. The main strivings of the period focused on the establishment of a modern Hungarian nation and bourgeois society, stressing the necessity of radical reforms. Most national symbols crucial for the Hungarian national identity in literature, architecture, and politics emerged during this era.

17 Spira, *A pestiek Petőfi és Haynau között*, 530.

18 Lutheran minister János Melczer used this epithet for Hentzi after a shell severed his eleven-year-old son's legs. The event is mentioned in Emília Kánya's memoir.

artillery fire. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Pest was one of the fastest growing cities in Europe. Around 1800, it was still a predominantly German-speaking city, provincial and backward by European standards, but in the 1830s, it began to develop rapidly, and the Hungarian-speaking population grew dramatically.¹⁹ The neoclassical townscape and increasingly metropolitan physical environment were, curiously, the result of a disaster, as most of the buildings in the city center were built or rebuilt after the great flood of 1838.²⁰ The inundation destroyed almost two-thirds of the buildings in Pest, so the building regulations that were adopted included strict criteria concerning the quality of building materials, wall thickness, façade design, and public health requirements.²¹ In the following years, fast-paced and massive construction projects led to the urbanization of the suburbs, which had previously had a rural atmosphere. The city began to shed its provincial character both in terms of architecture and transportation, and it began to resemble other European metropolises,²² emerging as a major European trade junction, political center, and cultural hub by 1900 (by which time it had become part of the city of Budapest, officially created in 1873 with the unification of Buda, Pest, and Óbuda).

The significant shifts in demographic figures left its mark on the cityscape. The proportion of housing areas increased, and the first planned district, Lipótváros, became Pest's most elegant quarter, characterized by a uniform style of multi-story houses and linearly designed streets.²³ These features were also noteworthy because in 1832, 80 percent of the buildings in Pest consisted only of a ground floor.²⁴ In the 1840s, the first public transport vehicles, omnibuses, appeared in the streets, connecting the inner parts of the city with the popular excursion sites in Buda and Pest. This can also be seen as an indication that the city's inhabitants no longer considered their city traversable on foot.²⁵

The first urban planning concept had been drawn up in 1808, when the Pest Planning Committee was established under the chairmanship of Palatine Joseph von Habsburg of Pest. During the Commission's term of office, the National

19 Nemes, *The Once and Future Budapest*, 8.

20 Bácskai, "Budapest története 1686–1873," 97.

21 *Ibid.*, 97.

22 Nemes, *The Once and Future Budapest*, 108.

23 Bácskai, "Budapest története 1686–1873," 96.

24 *Ibid.*, 99.

25 *Ibid.*

Museum,²⁶ the German Theater,²⁷ the National Theater,²⁸ the so-called Vigadó (Redoutensaal),²⁹ and the Lloyd Palace, home of the National Casino, were built.³⁰ In addition to the plans for public buildings, the Commission also gave approval for private construction projects, thus contributing to the development of a unified neoclassical urban landscape in Pest, mainly thanks to the work of two particularly outstanding architects, Mihály Pollack and József Hild.³¹ This cityscape was drastically altered (at some points of the city, virtually destroyed) by the bombardment ordered by Hentzi.

For some more decades, Terézváros, Józsefváros (Josephstadt), and Ferencváros (Franzstadt) would continue to count as suburbs with a rural atmosphere. According to Emőke Tomsics, even in the mid-nineteenth century, most of residents of the downtown area perceived the city as a closed unit encircled by the mediaeval city walls (which, however, no longer existed at the time), and many people thought of the areas beyond as rural or countryside.³² This peculiarity of the mental map of the city's inhabitants is well illustrated by an anecdote according to which the German actors of the Deutsches Stadttheater of Pest in Theater Square (present-day Vörösmarty Square) often exchanged banter with and mockingly asked the members of the National Theater (located at the point corresponding to the southeast corner of present-day Astoria): "well, how are you faring—out there"?³³

One of the prominent goals of the nationalist movements of the nineteenth century was to make Pest-Buda the capital of the country. As part of this, the idea of uniting the twin cities was suggested as early as the 1830s, primarily as a vision of the most influential reformer of the era, Count István Széchenyi.³⁴ In June 1849, the Hungarian government decreed the unification of Pest and Buda, but after the defeat of the War of Independence by the Habsburg dynasty, this was annulled.³⁵ In the following decades, the grand visions of the Hungarian

26 Sisa, *Motherland and Progress*, 90–94.

27 *Ibid.*, 86–89.

28 *Ibid.*, 78–79.

29 *Ibid.*, 86–89.

30 Bácskai, "Budapest története 1686–1873," 97.

31 *Ibid.*, 114.

32 Tomsics, *Budapest Atlantisza*, 77.

33 *Ibid.*, 77.

34 Nemes, *The Once and Future Budapest*, 55, 58.

35 *Ibid.*, 167.

nationalist movement and urban development became closely intertwined.³⁶ Nevertheless, Pest, Buda, and Óbuda would not be united until 1873 (six years after the 1867 Compromise establishing the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy), when the city was officially renamed Budapest.

“What had become of our beautiful city!” The Autobiography of Emília Kánya

According to Pierre Bourdieu, the biography is merely a rhetorical illusion, since real life is always chaotic. Different events, emotions, and actions become a logical and coherent whole only in the mind of the individual writing the biography, who constructs a destiny out of a life, a coherence out of coincidences. In the case of Emília Kánya’s autobiography, this process of construction is emphatically and clearly perceptible in several respects. First, the text was written more than five decades after the events, by which time the memory of the Revolution and War of Independence had been transformed to a considerable extent and become cultic. Second, in her narrative, Kánya foregrounded her identity as a woman, portraying herself in a way that was as consistent as possible with the norms and social expectations of the time. Third, she wrote her autobiography primarily for her children and consequently seems, on the basis of the text, to have paid particular attention to crafting the image of the loving mother.

Emília Kánya’s autobiography is a treasure trove for researchers in many respects. Several studies and a doctoral dissertation have already been written about her career as the first female editor in the Habsburg Empire, her role as a female patriot,³⁷ and her time spent in Fiume (today Rijeka, Croatia),³⁸ but her reflections on the War of Independence and the urban spaces of Pest-Buda at the time have never been analyzed. She led a life of norm transgression: as a mother of four, she divorced her husband, and in 1860, she founded Családi Kör (Family Circle), a journal that would be published successfully for the next twenty years. In her autobiography, however, she does not emphasize the unusual and norm-breaking nature of her career. On the contrary, she offers an exquisite balanced of the image of a dutiful, modest, norm-following woman in traditional

36 Ibid.

37 Török, “Kánya Emília szerkesztői és írói pályája”; Bozsoki, “Egy női karrier elbeszélésének nehézségei”; Bozsoki, “Editorial Strategies of Hungarian Women Editors”; Bozsoki, “A honleányság mint női emancipáció. Kánya Emília alakja és munkássága.”

38 Fábri, “Egy XIX. századi írónő Fiume magyarjairól”; Kiss Gy., “Fiumei képek Kánya Emília idejéből.”

female roles on the one hand and her pioneering enterprise on the other. Even in terms of the few weeks addressed by the present study, a traditional female role, that of the mother, is dominant in Kánya's description of the siege in May 1849, alongside her personal experiences of Hentzi's bombardment. Although Kánya was 21 years old at the time of the events, her memoir was written fifty-four years later, in 1903, so they must be treated as the recollections of a 75-year-old woman.

Born in Pest, Emília Kánya knew the city well and had followed its changes since her childhood. She had been barely ten years old at the time of the great flood of Pest in 1838, she had attended the opening of the National Theater, and she had witnessed the laying of the foundation stone of the Chain Bridge. Her father, Pál Kánya, was a prominent teacher at the Lutheran Grammar School. He was closely associated with many members of the contemporary intelligentsia in Pest and with the family of the then Palatine Archduke Joseph, who was very active in the development of the city. As a child of a Lutheran family, Emília Kánya grew up in the area of Kohl Markt Square, now Deák Square, known as "Insula Lutherana" because of its Lutheran institutions (church, grammar school, etc.). In 1847, she married Gottfried Feldinger, the son of an iron merchant from Temesvár (today Timișoara, Romania). Their first child, Irén, was born on October 23, 1848, so Kánya went through the siege of Buda Castle with her then barely seven-month-old daughter. The latter fact, which provided a way of focusing on the image of the mother fleeing with her daughter in the commemorative act, fundamentally determined the narrative of the parts of the autobiography that relate to the period of the War of Independence.

Kánya notes in her narrative that she is not writing with the intention of documenting military and political events, but rather to record her personal experiences: "I'm not going to talk about the facts, which are historical and which are now etched in the memory of generations, I just want to give an account of the prevailing mood a little." At the onset of the siege, she was visiting her relatives in the Nákó House, on the site of present-day Gresham Palace, in the immediate vicinity of the Pest end of the Chain Bridge.³⁹ She soon had to flee, as this area was particularly exposed to the artillery fire from Buda Castle. She was assisted in her escape by János Balassa, a professor at the Faculty of Medicine, whose sister also lived nearby:

39 Kánya Emília, *Réges-régi időkről*, 106.

He had already arranged that we should not spend the night in this exposed house, we should pack the most necessary things and he would take us all to a safer place in the evening, but we should not go by carriage, which would be an easier safer target for the shooters, but should escape on foot, remaining near to the buildings.⁴⁰

They went to the Medical University, confident that the building's thick walls would provide enough protection. They holed themselves up in the vast halls of the university in Újvilág (now Semmelweis) Street in the city center, while outside, the volley of cannonballs was incessant. As even this area was considered an especially high-risk zone for shelling, the next day, they moved to the “then newly built and still uninhabited” Commercial Hospital in Hársfa Street in Terézváros.⁴¹

Due to the bombardment, most people were on the run from the city center. Those who could sought refuge in the suburbs or the surrounding villages. The mental map described above, centered literally on the narrow urban core, was transformed in a flash by the emergency. Suddenly, the outlying neighborhoods offering hope for refuge were given special attention. Although Terézváros already counted as a suburb, it was not a danger-free zone. Many of the people in the area perished in their beds or at their desks from the shells hitting the buildings. Almost all the ego-documents written during the siege or in retrospect recounted tragedies of this kind, either personally experienced or heard second-hand. Emília Kánya's autobiography captured the constant stream of horrific news of burnt buildings and shells crushing the legs of people walking by or smashing their heads. She also made a special note of the tragedy suffered by the young son of an acquaintance, Lutheran minister János Melczer from Rákoskeresztúr. Melczer's son's legs were mangled by a shell.⁴²

Hársfa Street was located in the outer part of Terézváros, closer to the City Park, bordered by gardens and grassy areas. However, Hentzi did not spare this part of the city either. Kánya vividly describes both the sight of the shells drilling into the ground nearby and the thick black smoke billowing from the roofs of the city buildings, as well as the terrible sounds of the “infernal whistling,” a more “hideous” noise than anything she had ever heard.⁴³ One night, after the

40 Ibid., 107.

41 Ibid., 107–8. On the history of Commercial Hospital, see, e.g. Liptay, “A pesti kereskedelmi kórház,” 116–18.

42 Ibid., 108.

43 Ibid.

bullets had come so close to the hospital building in which they had taken shelter that the windows had cracked and shattered in the courtyard, she decided to leave Pest behind altogether. “Away from here, away from the city, to where the fiery embers of hell do not reach! I was haunted all the way by the fiery shreds of paper and bullet fragments. I ran all the way through the City Park and only stopped at the Hermina Chapel.⁴⁴ There, I collapsed on the steps of the chapel, took my dear little Irén [her daughter] in my arms, and wept bitterly. I could hardly recover my senses.”⁴⁵

The modes and destinations of the flight of the inhabitants were fundamentally determined by their social status. The poor and less well-off fled to the City Park to escape the danger, creating a kind of “tent city” or refuge town, as this area was out of the reach of the castle artillery. In 1903, Kánya, who did not flee to the City Park with her family but only passed through it, penned the following recollections: “Where there are buildings around the chapel now, there were trees and lawns then, and many thousands of poor people huddled under tents made of tarpaulins. All that misery! They were selling food, making noise, bargaining, crying, swearing. And the cannons just roared on and on!”⁴⁶ In Kánya’s mental map of the city at the time of the siege, then, the City Park was, in Kevin Lynch’s terms, a landmark of sorts, an area sharply separated from its surroundings.

Wealthy citizens tried to leave the city behind them completely. This is how the Kőbánya railway became a particularly important node for them. Kánya’s family had only one goal in mind: no matter where they were going, they should be heading for the railway at all costs, and so they went to Kőbánya, where a multitude had already gathered, presumably following a similar strategy. In the crowd, Emília Kánya spotted the aforementioned author Jókai and his famous wife, actress Róza Laborfalvi. The importance of social status was also evident here. The Kánya family was having lunch in the garden of a tavern, as were many others waiting for the train. Emília Kánya was accompanied not only by her husband and child, but also by a nanny, who had tied some essential items of clothing into a large shawl before leaving Terézváros and who had carried

44 Through her father, Emília Kánya was on friendly terms with Palatine Joseph, who had built the chapel in honor of his daughter, the charitable Hermina, after she died as a young nun. The Hermina Chapel was still under construction at the time: the foundation stone had been laid in 1842, but the shrine was not consecrated until 1856.

45 Kánya Emília, *Réges-régi időkéről*, 108–9.

46 *Ibid.*, 109.

the little girl in her arms during the journey.⁴⁷ Some important attributes of the bourgeois mentality were thus retained even in the times of greatest emergency. The family finally managed to leave the city. They fled to the village of Pilis, near Pest, where Sámuel Sárkány, a good friend of Kánya's husband, served as the Reformed pastor.⁴⁸

Kánya's narrative puts considerable emphasis on her role as a mother. The description of their flight contains numerous references to the presence of her daughter. With regard to the night spent at the Medical University, Kánya noted that the little girl had been the only one among who had been able to fall asleep. The adults had stayed awake on the hard benches at the university. References to the daughter remained prominent in the description of the subsequent "stations" of their flight. This may be related to the fact that, in contrast with many other ego-documents about the siege, fear is the most dominant emotion in the description of the events, more specifically, the fear of a mother concerned for the safety of her child. The decision to leave Terézváros is also presented along similar lines: "folding my husband's arms in mine, I escaped from the hell that I could not possibly endure any longer, so overwhelmed was I by the horror, the danger threatening my child's life."⁴⁹ Thus, Kánya's recollections of the events, at least according to the autobiography, were fundamentally determined by the fact that she had experienced the threat of Hentzi's bombardment as a mother. The presence of her infant daughter influenced her decisions (at least according to her autobiography) and greatly heightened her fears, but the girl also represents, in the narrative, the perfect counterpoint to the horrors. Recalling the lunch in the garden of the restaurant in Kőbánya, Kánya writes, "I reveled in the cooing of my dear little child: she cooed so sweetly as if there were nothing wrong with the world, with the sweet sun of God and the cloudless blue sky upon us."⁵⁰

If we consider the autobiography as a whole, it is striking that Kánya's references to use of space in peacetime revolved around the downtown area of Pest, the Buda Hills (Svábhegy, Városmajor), and the city's "green salons," i.e. the parks that functioned as important catalysts for social life in the period. Thus, the mental map that emerges from her writing does not focus on the different districts so much as on nodes, such as the Insula Lutherana, which provided her with a family home during her childhood and after the breakup of her first

47 Ibid., 108.

48 Ibid., 109.

49 Ibid., 108.

50 Ibid., 109.

marriage. During the siege of Buda, however, she was forced to flee into and move over urban spaces that had previously been and, for the most part, would also remain completely indifferent on her mental map. Such was the case with Hársfa Street in Outer Terézváros and Kőbánya, which provided an opportunity to leave the city by way of the railway network. The only station of their flight that she had known and loved since her childhood was the City Park. This may be why, in her memoir, she highlights the sad, strikingly unusual appearance of the park, which had become a refugee camp. Even more emotional and astonishing, however, is her description of the demolished city:

My God! What had become of our beautiful city! Danube Lane had become almost unrecognizable. The great Redout building had been ruined by shells, its great columns lay on the ground, its windows like the sockets of blinded giant eyes, staring darkly ahead. And Nagyhíd Street [present-day Deák Street], the streets and squares nearby! So moved was I by this horrible sight that I burst out crying, shedding hot tears, which were tears not merely of pain, but of unbridled disgust and contempt at such a barbarous display of revenge! What crime had that poor town and its peaceful inhabitants committed! How many people were made homeless, whose homes and property were now in ruins!⁵¹

The Redoute, or Vigadó, had played an important role in both the cultural life of the Age of Reform and the political life of the War of Independence. The building, considered a pinnacle of neoclassical architecture in Pest, was inaugurated in 1833. Its concert hall had hosted such notable musicians as Johann Strauss and Ferenc Liszt. In July 1848, the first National Assembly of the People was also held here, at which Lajos Kossuth asked for 200,000 soldiers to continue the fight for freedom. The destruction of the building was thus symbolic, as was its reconstruction in 1865, albeit in a different form.⁵²

Most of the city's inhabitants were confronted with the scale of the devastation of Hentzi's bombardment when they returned to the areas of the city that had been deemed particularly dangerous during the siege and therefore had been abandoned by many. Kánya, who had fled to Pilis, returned to Pest on the second day after the Hungarian victory, but even during her absence she was preoccupied (at least according to her later recollections) with the losses

51 Ibid., 110.

52 On the history of the Vigadó, see Holló, *The Vigadó: A Fairy-tale Palace on the Danube*; Sisa, *A magyar művészet a 19. században*, 69–70; Sisa, *Motherland and Progress*, 86–89, 300–7.

suffered by the city and its inhabitants: “The bombardment of my dear native city continued on and on, and night after night we heard every single shot, destroying who knows whom and what that we loved!”⁵³ It was upon her return that it became clear to her that many of the imposing buildings of Age-of-Reform Pest, which had flourished in her childhood, had been destroyed. The shocking sight of the Vigadó in ruins was also mentioned in the writings of many of her contemporaries and in the contemporary press. In her memoirs, Kánya emphasizes both the destruction of the city’s architectural environment and the desperate plight of the its homeless. In contrast with the impressions shared in the writings of many of her contemporaries, in her case, the strong emotions (“unbridled disgust,” “contempt”) aroused by the sight of the destruction were explained with reference to purely humanitarian considerations. Although in other parts of her autobiography the role of patriotism is also very prominent, she does not describe the siege of Buda from the perspective of a Hungarian citizen impassioned by nationalist sentiments, but rather as a mother fearing for the wellbeing of her family and her hometown.

According to Liz Stanley, a biography shows ever different elements of a life actually lived, so it can be interpreted as a kaleidoscope.⁵⁴ From the same elements of a story, new configurations may emerge each time we look at them. In Kánya’s autobiography, the interpretative framework of events was determined by the maternal role above all else. She weaves her personal experiences of the siege of Buda into the narrative of an escape. This procedure had a fundamental impact on her mental map as well. As the inner city of Pest constituted a site of danger for and therefore threat to her family’s life, her primary goal was to search for a suitable escape route. All the while, she used a kind of biblical allusion. Her writing shaped the autobiographical self with the help of the Virgin Mary’s topos: the tone of the text is set with allusions to the plight of the prototype of the mother who is looking for safety and seeking accommodation for her child.⁵⁵ Kánya is cast (casts herself) in the role of the mother fleeing in times of distress with her baby of only a few months of age.

53 Kánya, *Réges-régi időkről*, 110.

54 Stanley, *The Auto/biographical I*, 158.

55 Bozsoki, “A honleányság mint női emancipáció,” 115–16; Bozsoki, “Sokat tehet a nő a társadalomban.”

“Not for all the treasures in the world would I trade having been present at the magnificent capture of Buda Castle”: Lilla Bulyovszky’s Letters

Lilla Bulyovszky, a sixteen-year-old actress of the National Theater,⁵⁶ lived through the siege as a young wife. In November 1848, she married Gyula Bulyovszky, one of the chief protagonists of the revolutionary events of March 15 who worked in the Ministry of the Interior in the spring of 1849.⁵⁷ Thus, the young couple did not go through the siege together, as Gyula had moved to Debrecen with the Hungarian government in January 1849, while Lilla was tied to her acting job in Pest.

When examining correspondences, it is worth bearing in mind one of the most important characteristics of this type of source; namely, that the person writing the letter formed their narrative and self-image for the addressee. Letters, which provide space for self-reflection, are a particularly important part of the narrative that the person has created about their own life.⁵⁸ At the same time, the writer constructs an image not only of themselves but also of the addressee and their relationship.⁵⁹ In Lilla Bulyovszky’s letters, the images of the devoted, bold woman patriot and the loving wife are prominent.

As Bulyovszky wrote her letters at the time of the events, they offer impressions of the excitement surrounding the siege, which had not yet been decided. She wrote the following lines at 9 o’clock on the morning on May 14:

Back on the ninth, the daily bombardment made me, like everyone else, move out of the city, although the suburbs are even more expensive than the city center on such occasions. ... The city is bombarded every day, sometimes in the evening, sometimes in the morning, sometimes in the afternoon, countless houses have already burnt away, as they say, there was a fire in Sip Street, and even our belongings may have been burnt.⁶⁰

56 Her original name was Lilla Szilágyi. After her marriage, however, she appeared in public as Lilla Bulyovszky, both as an actress and as a writer. In 1859, she left the National Theater in Pest, and over the course of the next fifteen years, she enjoyed a distinguished international career. In Germany, she became known as Lilla von Bulyovszky, and her greatest successes came at the Court Theater in Munich.

57 Péchy, *Hűség és hűtlenség*, 36.

58 Eirinen, “The Narrative Self,” 90–91.

59 *Ibid.*, 91.

60 V. Waldapfel, *A forradalom és szabadságharc levelestára*, vol. 3, 350–51.

In the above sentence, Bulyovszky is referring to their residence in Pest, Síp Street, which was close to her workplace, the National Theater. As for the location of her temporary accommodation, she wrote merely that it was “towards the small woods,”⁶¹ presumably referring to the area around the City Park, which her contemporaries would call the Stadtwaldchen (Városerdőcske, Small City Woods).⁶² In the weeks of the siege, the post office in the casern on Üllői Road was the most important node on her mental map because it was here that she was able to stay in touch with her husband. As she wrote at 6 p.m. on May 18, “At the moment, the post office is in the casern at Ülle, a good one hour’s walk from my present dwelling, but I still went twice a day until I finally received your two letters, to my great joy.”⁶³ The Üllői Road casern was built between 1845 and 1848.⁶⁴ It is entirely typical of the mental map of Pest in the Age of Reform that Lilla Bulyovszky did not consider this part of Pest part of the city. The following remark from the same letter testifies to this: “I cannot even read the newspapers, because there is no one to bring them to me, I dare not go into the city, because my life is very dear after reading your letter.”⁶⁵

From the outset, the relationship between Lilla and Gyula was coupled with a zealous love of their homeland. Lilla initially explained her attraction to Gyula, for instance, as the fervor felt by a patriot girl long before she had become aware of her love. Her journal entries provide a detailed description of how they met and how their love developed.⁶⁶ They met at several balls in early 1848 and danced together on each occasion. March 15, 1848 was important emotional milestone for Lilla, when she listened to Gyula’s speech in front of the Landerer printing house, a venue crucial for the Revolution: “many beautiful and true words had parted from his lips, at which I felt a special affection for him that I would decipher thus: who would not love and respect this enthusiastic patriot?”

61 Ibid., 359.

62 Magyar, “Kertek, parkok Buda-Pest társaséletében a 19. században,” 145.

63 V. Waldapfel, *A forradalom és szabadságharc levelestára*, vol. 3, 359.

64 Sisa, “Az Üllői úti laktanya”; Sisa, *A magyar művészet a 19. században*, 218. It was later known as the Maria Theresa Barracks and then, later, as the Kilián Barracks. It played a key role in the 1956 revolution, as it was located at an important strategic point in Budapest, at the corner of Üllői Road and Ferenc Boulevard, near Corvin Alley, which by then had become a gateway to the city center. In the middle of the nineteenth century, however, the same area occupied a very different position in relation to the contemporary center.

65 V. Waldapfel, *A forradalom és szabadságharc levelestára*, vol. 3, 360.

66 MTA KIK Kt., Ms 2442/8. The journal has not yet been published in its entirety; excerpts have been published in Blanka Péchy’s novel about Mrs. Lilla Bulyovszky, née Szilágyi: Péchy, *Hűségés bútlenek*.

In recent decades, the secondary literature has gradually stopped treating nationalism as mere ideology or discourse and has begun to consider it the sum total of lived feelings, experiences, and personal memories.⁶⁷ Approaching the question of nationalism in everyday experience from an innovative perspective, Anthony P. Cohen began to use the term personal nationalism to refer to the active role played by members of a nation as individuals in their own right as they personalized their sense of nationhood and created their own meanings.⁶⁸ Cohen's concept was further elaborated by Raúl Moreno-Almendral, who focused on nation-building from a micro-historical perspective.⁶⁹ As sources, ego-documents offer opportunities to examine how individuals experience their national identities, how they tailor these identities to their life situations, and how they use the concept of nation to make sense of their life experiences and life events. They thus offer insights into the ways in which national identity influences how people think, how they understand their destinies, and their perceptions of the world. This approach, as exemplified by Reetta Eiranen's research, can be useful in examining the correspondence of engaged and married couples at the time, as it offers some grasp of why a commitment to the national ideal provided a fundamental bond between couples that cemented romantic feelings.⁷⁰

In the letters written by Lilla Bulyovszky to her husband, the description of the besieged city is also tinged with national sentiments. In both Lilla's letters and the letters written by her husband to her, the recapture of Buda Castle is presented as a great event which was an exceptional and sublime happening to experience personally. This perspective even overrode their sense of fear. Lilla offers the following description of her experience of the conclusion of the siege on May 24:

My Gyula, I am poor, but not for all the treasures in the world would I trade having been present at the magnificent capture of Buda Castle. From two o'clock until the morning I sat on the sandhills, listening to the constant sound of rifles, and with every shot a deep prayer flew from my bosom to heaven for the life of our honvéd [Hungarian

67 See, e.g., Kivimäki, *Lived Nation*.

68 Cohen, "Personal Nationalism," 808. Quoted in: Kivimäki et al., "Lived Nation: Histories of Experience and Emotion in Understanding Nationalism," 8.

69 Moreno-Almendral, "Reconstructing the history of nationalist cognition and everyday nationhood from personal accounts." Quoted in Kivimäki et al., "Lived Nation: Histories of Experience and Emotion in Understanding Nationalism," 8.

70 Eiranen, "Personal Nationalism in a Marital Relationship."

soldiers] fighting for freedom; how my soul rejoiced when I spotted the first national flag! Later, I went to the banks of the Danube, I saw how the Croats were thrown down from the battlements, but, alas, I also saw how the soldiers, holding the Nádor-Kert [Palatine's Garden], fighting for their fatherland and honor, were floating down, some dead, some wounded. I could not keep watching, I left the banks of the Danube and walked the streets of our shattered city with tears in my eyes. Only here and there are windows to be seen in the houses, the new market houses all stand mute, as if the inhabitants had died, some in Leopoldstadt look as if they were about to fall apart within a minute.⁷¹

The sixteen-year-old actress had such a strong desire to see the events from up close that she watched the siege unfold from the banks of the Danube. Her curiosity was not unique. In a letter written on May 21, the newspaper writer and editor Richard Noisser marveled that “people are so used to the shooting that thousands of curious people are standing on the Pest banks watching this history [sic].”⁷² Even more astonishing to him was the fact that three-quarters of the crowd were women, undeterred by the fact that shots were occasionally fired from the castle in the direction of the onlookers for “private amusement.”⁷³ In this situation, the Danube constituted a borderline (or edge, to use one of Lynch's terms) separating Buda and Pest and at the same time functioning as the “stage” for the events as seen from Pest and thus becoming an “auditorium.”

In an earlier letter, dated 18 May, Lilla Bulyovszky had already mentioned that her only “amusement”⁷⁴ in her solitude was watching the artillery shells being launched at the castle and at Pest. However, it is clear from her writings that she did not watch the siege closely out of sheer curiosity, but rather out of patriotic fervor. She was aware of the symbolic significance of Buda, of the fact that the siege of this city was one of the most important events in Hungarian history. Nor can we overlook her remark that she had also watched “how the Croats were thrown down from the battlements,”⁷⁵ and it was only the sight of

71 V. Waldapfel, *A forradalom és szabadságharc levelestáza*, vol. 3, 387.

72 *Ibid.*, 371–72.

73 *Ibid.*, 372.

74 At the time, the Hungarian term “multság” meant not (only) entertainment but also pastime in a broad sense.

75 The garrison led by Hentzi numbered some 5,000 men. An infantry battalion consisting of one Italian and one Ukrainian-Polish battalion of regulars and two Croatian battalions of border guards made up the bulk of the castle's defenders (Hermann, “Heinrich Hentzi, a budavári Leonidász,” 55). Lilla Bulyovszky

the corpses of the defenders of the Hungarian cause that was so unbearable to her that she felt compelled to leave the scene.

In the couple's correspondence, it is also worth noting how the husband, Gyula Bulyovszky reacted to his wife's experiences of the siege at close quarters, while he himself was far away from the events. On May 6, when the news reached him that the imperial army was shelling Pest, he wrote the following lines:

The news is just beginning to spread here that Henzi [sic] is having Pest bombarded, believe me, my angel, if it is true, my Lord Henzi's bullet shocks my heart no less than the windowpanes of the buildings on Danube Lane. My soul trembles at the knowledge that my only treasure, my wife, is so exposed to this terror, and I am, in turn, exalted in the knowledge that, if I have been kept from the glory of our fight, at least you, the better half of my soul, share in it, though not with a weapon that belongs in the hand of man, but with the secret fervor of your heart, which is the purest prayer before God, who watches over nations with His omnipotence.⁷⁶

And at the end of the siege, he wrote the following:

Your trembling and the struggle between life and death since Buda was taken are now over, and you who have stood heroically near the danger will ever remain in the great memory of the days to come. You were witnesses of what centuries would not bring us, if we could live to see it. The more I trembled for you, the better it feels now that, beyond the horriblenesses [sic] of danger, you at least, my sweet Lilla, have been an eyewitness to this sublime event, and you shall tell me many a good and great tale among your kisses.⁷⁷

Although Lilla, having experienced the events at first hand, frequently referred to the significance of the successful siege, the rhetoric in her letters contains less pathos than the writings of her husband, who observed the developments from Debrecen. Rather, her letters contain information that is interesting from the point of view of the history of lifestyles. She regularly wrote, for example, about the high prices in the city, both for accommodations and for food. During the siege, the suburbs became more expensive than the city center,

presumably believed that the vast majority of the soldiers fighting against the Hungarian soldiers were of Croatian descent.

76 V. Waldapfel, *A forradalom és szabadságharc levelestára*, vol. 3, 309.

77 Ibid., 394.

which everyone was trying to flee. She described how much she paid for a bed in her temporary accommodation in the suburbs, where there were six people to a room, so there was constant chatter and noise, and in the next room “singing and shouting, as is customary in a public house.”⁷⁸ Nevertheless, she stayed there even after the siege had ended because, as she wrote on May 24, there were no accommodations in the city “even at a good price.”⁷⁹ Her letters show that the National Theater, which was closed during the siege and reopened on May 23, could not pay her wages that month. She had to deal with a significant rise in prices. In addition to rent, bread, pork, and beef were also, she writes, “super expensive,” and the price of shoes and clothing had also increased.⁸⁰

In her description of the conditions following the recapture of Buda, Lilla Bulyovszky not only reflected on the physical environment of the city but also described how the citizens of Pest tried to get to Buda as quickly as possible to purchase possessions that had been looted from the destroyed buildings in Buda, which the soldiers sold for trifling amounts.⁸¹ Those who got from Pest to Buda as quickly as possible got the best prices, but transport between the twin cities was not easy:

Those who went to Buda in the morning, clinging on the Chain Bridge ledge, risking their lives, got everything cheap; in the afternoon, we too wanted to cross, my mother was already in the boat, the crowds were overflowing, I luckily could not go in, the boat turned upside down and only eight people who fell on their feet were able to escape, thank heavens my mother was among those eight...⁸²

At the point of the siege when the Hungarian soldiers had broken into the castle, Hentzi ordered the Chain Bridge to be blown up, but the attempt made by his aide, Alois Alnoch von Edelstadt, failed. Although the bridge was not officially opened until after the defeat of the War of Independence in November 1849, it was used by the military on occasion from January that year, and on May 27, 1849, Pál Hajnik, the newly appointed police chief of the city, allowed civilian pedestrians to cross. According to Lilla Bulyovszky’s description dated May 24, the most determined inhabitants of Pest attempted the crossing immediately

78 Ibid., 351.

79 Ibid., 388.

80 Ibid., 350.

81 Ibid., 387.

82 Ibid., 387–88.

after the siege in the hopes of material gain. The young actress would not have rejected the chance to purchase stolen “goods” sold by the soldiers at low prices had her mother’s accident on the Danube, mentioned above, as well as a lack of funds, prevented her from crossing the river to “shop.” Thus, she could only report on her landlord’s acquisitions (silver cutlery, a pocket watch with a large chain, a gilded mirror, etc.).⁸³ The joy of the siege, which ended in a Hungarian victory, the pain of wandering in a shattered city, the absence of her husband, and the problems of everyday life all feature prominently in Lilla Bulyovszky’s narrative. As a result, her letters paint a nuanced picture of the period of the siege and of everyday life in the weeks that followed, both in terms of emotional history and in terms of lifestyle and urban history.

“Our fortress is also heavily damaged”: Anna Glasz’s Letter from Buda Castle

A viewpoint radically different from the writings of Emília Kánya and Lilla Bulyovszky emerges from a letter written in German by Anna Glasz, during the siege, addressed to Mrs. Ignác Andrássy, née Mária Végh.⁸⁴ The only certain information about the writer is that she was a resident of Buda Castle. In the press of the 1820s and 1830s, the name “Glasz Anna, született Anchély Aszszony [Anna Glasz, née Mrs. Anchély],” who “has been engaged in the education of adolescent maidens for several years” at Szervita Place, Pest, appeared several times.⁸⁵ Although there is no clear evidence that this Anna Glasz was the same as the Anna Glasz who lived in the Buda Castle in 1849, the fact that at that time there was a daughter named Anna in the Anchely family (ennobled in 1801) suggests that she might well have been.⁸⁶

The address on the inside page of the letter reads “Nach Martonvásár. St. Péter.” The latter may refer to Kajászószentpéter, located near Martonvásár, Fejér County, 36 kilometers from Budapest. The estate of Kajászószentpéter came into the possession of the Andrássy family around 1790. In the 1830s,

83 V. Waldapfel, *A forradalom és szabadságharc levelestára*, vol. 3, 388.

84 Kiscell Museum, 27066. The letter was published by Ervin Seenger. Seenger, “Levél Buda 1849. évi ostromáról,” 479–80.

85 *Hazai’ s Külföldi Tudósítások*, August 25, September 1, September 12, 1821. *Hazai’ s Külföldi Tudósítások*, October 15, October 19, 1831.

86 Her father, János Anchely, who had been promoted to the nobility, served first at the Court Chamber and later at the Governor’s Council between 1769 and 1786, and then as the director of the Episcopate of Vác. On December 4, 1801, his wife, Anna Sagmiller, and his five children, Károly, Ferenc, Dávid, Anna, and Mária, were ennobled together with him.

Ignác Andrásy served as a Lieutenant Colonel (Oberstleutnant), a rank higher than major and lower than colonel.⁸⁷ When he died in 1837, the estate passed through his wife to the gentry Végh family.⁸⁸ The addressee of the letter, Mária Végh (1799–1876), had been a widow for twelve years at the time of the siege of Buda in 1849. She had turned fifty that year. She would die childless. In 1846, she established a foundation for the poor in Kajászószentpéter.⁸⁹ In 1875, a year before her death, she donated the family's valuable library of nearly 400 volumes to the National Library.⁹⁰

Compared to the sources analyzed so far, Anna Glasz's letter shows the perspective of the "other side," both geographically and politically. As a resident of Buda Castle, she (unlike the previous two women) was afraid not of Hentzi's bombardment but of the cannons of Artúr Görgei besieging the castle. Some of her comments also show that she was not exactly pleased with the Hungarian victory.

Of the city's inhabitants, those living in the Buda Castle district were the most directly affected by the siege.⁹¹ Hentzi had warned them as early as April 23 that he would defend the castle to the last, and he advised them to leave their homes or to have enough food on hand for two months. Although this caused considerable alarm among the inhabitants of the district, very few people heeded his advice, as they did not want to leave their valuables behind, even though they could not afford to buy large quantities of food at short notice.⁹² During the siege, those who remained in the castle were plagued not only by food shortages, but also by fear of diseases, with epidemics of cholera and typhus both breaking out within the castle walls. On top of all this, they were forced to live in cellars, and even then they were not really safe, because shells would often break through the ceilings of the cellars.⁹³

Anna Glasz started writing the letter on May 11 and finished it on May 26. In a sense, it thus became a diary of sorts (if addressed to someone else), because during the two weeks between the two dates, she repeatedly recorded current events along with her emotional responses to these events. A sentiment of uncertainty pervades her letter, and she hints several times that she cannot

87 Farkas, "Andrásy Ignác Thuróczy-krónikája," 226.

88 Czanik, *Kajászó(szentpéter) község és református egyháza története*, 31.

89 Farkas, "Andrásy Ignác Thuróczy-krónikája," 226.

90 *Ibid.*, 226.

91 See Spira, *A pestiek Petőfi és Haynau között*, 518–26.

92 *Ibid.*, 518.

93 *Ibid.*, 521–22.

tell what the next minute will bring. The very first sentence of the letter alludes to this: “I am still alive.”⁹⁴ Like Lilla Bulyovszky, Glasz dated the events to the hour. In the first section of her letter, dated May 11, she looks back on the first moments of the siege, which had begun a week earlier:

Eight days ago today, that is, at noon on the fourth, a dreadful shelling began, which continued uninterrupted for 24 hours and lasted for a total of six days, with but a few quieter interludes; the most terrifying moment, however, was the night of the eight, when the Castle was bombarded with red-hot bullets, one of which set fire to a large building in Herrengasse, which burned to the ground. Earlier, several buildings, including the [imperial] palace, caught fire, though fortunately the fire was put out.⁹⁵

In the above passage, Glasz refers to two significant features of Buda Castle: one of the key mediaeval streets in the area, Úri Street (Herrengasse / Gentlemen’s Street), which runs from Dísz Square to Kapisztrán Square and the royal palace at the southern end of Castle Hill in Buda. In the rest of the letter, she mentions other streets, squares, and buildings damaged by the shelling.

The description of Pest in her letter dwells on the destruction (or, rather, the incoming news of the destruction) in the areas affected by the bombardment. It is worth noting the buildings she highlights. First on the list were the Redoutengebäude and the Trattner-Károlyi House (which had burned to the ground). Emília Kánya also mentioned the Redoute of Pest, while the Trattner-Károlyi House was home to a major printing house of the Age of Reform, as well as the Hungarian Scientific Society.⁹⁶ The two-story building, which had survived the great Pest flood of 1838, had been extended with the addition of a third story in 1846–1847. Its roof structure was completely burnt down in the bombing, but it was later restored.

Although the bombardment of Pest was portrayed as a terrible event in Anna Glasz’s letter, unlike many of her contemporaries, she did not interpret the act as a barbarous crime committed by Hentzi, but rather as a “terrible consequence” of the attacks launched by Artúr Görgei, who laid siege to the castle. She was referring shelling which took place on the night of May 8, which caused considerable damage to the castle buildings: “Even then, the commander

94 Seenger, “Levél Buda 1849. évi ostromáról,” 479.

95 Ibid., 479.

96 H. Boros, “A Trattner-Károlyi ház Pesten,” 150.

here thought he would take revenge on Pesth if such events were repeated. This was done in the night [from the eighth to] the ninth with shells, which caused terrible destruction [in Pest].”⁹⁷ Although the letter is rather imprecise in its timing (Hentzi had started shelling Pest on the fourth and had kept the barrage of shells going almost every day),⁹⁸ it clearly shows that Anna Glasz accepted Hentzi’s justification for the retaliation. Thus, in her eyes, Hentzi was not “the cannibal-hearted commander of Buda Castle,” but a leader who acted to protect the castle and did exactly what he had threatened to do because his earlier warnings had been ignored. As far as her perspective is concerned, it is also worth noting that Glasz called it her “last joy” that Norbert Andrásy, a family member of the addressee, was appointed aide-de-camp to Ludwig von Welden, the commander-in-chief of the Imperial and Royal Hungarian Army.⁹⁹ This remark suggests that Glasz was loyal to the imperial court, as does the fact that, unlike many other townspeople, she seems, on the basis of her letter at least, to have taken no joy in the end of the siege as a moment of liberation, but rather was only relieved that she was no longer in any direct danger.

Anna Glasz’s letter mentions the name of another person who remained loyal to the empire. Her entry of May 14, in which she recounts the events of the previous two days, again highlights the houses on fire in Úri Street and on Dísz Square, (to which she had referred in earlier passages), but she mentions other Buda districts (Víziváros / Water Town, Krisztinaváros / Christinenstadt), mainly in connection with acquaintances living there: “The night before yesterday, there was a fire in the Wasserstadt [Víziváros], in Landstrasse [Ország Road], and in two places in Christinenstadt very close to Wirozsil’s, with a rather violent wind; and yesterday at around 10 o’clock at night, several buildings in the fortress in Herrengasse and on Paradeplatz [Dísz Square / Parade Square] caught fire.”¹⁰⁰ The name Wirozsil probably means the family of Antal Virozsil, a university professor and jurist who had been styled Rector of the University

97 Seenger, “Levél Buda 1849. évi ostromáról,” 479.

98 Hermann, “Heinrich Hentzi, a budavári Leonidász,” 56.

99 Seenger, “Levél Buda 1849. évi ostromáról,” 479. Although von Welden held the post of commander-in-chief for a short time, from April 12 to May 30 only, Norbert Andrásy remained the aide-de-camp to Julius Jacob von Haynau, von Welden’s replacement, too. Thus, it fell to him a few months later, in September 1849, to accompany the vanquished Artur Görgei, who had taken Buda Castle, to Klagenfurt, the place of his exile, after Hungary’s surrender at Világos had ended the War of Independence. (Görgey, *Életem és működésem Magyarországon 1848-ban és 1849-ben*, vol. 2, 435.)

100 Seenger, “Levél Buda 1849. évi ostromáról,” 480.

of Pest in 1841.¹⁰¹ In July 1848, he requested permission to retire, after which he moved to Krisztinaváros.¹⁰² When the siege of Buda Castle ended with the victory of the Hungarian troops on May 21, 1849, Anna Glasz fled to Virozsil's family. This personal acquaintance is why Krisztinaváros occupied a prominent place on her mental map.¹⁰³ Her address there is given at the end of the letter thus: "Aldásisches Haus, Nro. 227," referring to the so-called Áldásy House, commissioned by master butcher Antal Áldásy in the early 1840s.¹⁰⁴ In a refashioned form, this building still stands on Krisztina körút 57. It houses the Museum of Theater History.

Glasz's letter not only gives us a bird's-eye view of the twin cities, the descriptions of which are fundamentally influenced by the news of the destruction caused by shells and cannonballs, it also features a poignant, personal experience of the city, which affects the writer's own home:

Our fortress has also been heavily damaged. In the square in front of my windows, some 40 shells fell; two of them broke through the roof of our house, two others ricocheted off and exploded in the courtyard, a glowing twelve-pounder grazed the window of my back room, where I had retreated and where I was still lying in bed at 3 o'clock in the morning half asleep, and fell down just in front of it. So far, however, God has protected me wonderfully! As I write this, a rather violent volley of cannon fire has just begun.¹⁰⁵

These lines are found in the first entry of May 11, which describes the events of the night of May 8. The entry on the morning of May 14 begins thus:

Oh, Marie, what scenes of horror! The shelling of the fortress and the assault on the waterworks continue with short intervals almost all

101 On the career of Antal Virozsil, see Szabadfalvi, *Múltunk öröksége*, 9–19.

102 His retirement was only temporary, however, and a new phase in his career began after the defeat of the War of Independence. When the university authorities were dissolved by Karl von Geringer on August 20, 1849, Antal Virozsil was appointed President of the provisional University Council. He was appointed Rector in 1850 and Imperial Councilor in 1851.

103 *Krisztinaváros* was the youngest suburb of Buda, founded in the early 1770s. Although the city magistrate had originally intended to settle vineyard workers without possessions there, the area soon became a popular elite quarter for wealthy citizens. By the early nineteenth century, it had taken on a suburban character with gardens. Some of its newer buildings served as summer resorts for people who owned houses in Buda Castle (Gál, "Kétszáz éves a Krisztinaváros I.," 20–22).

104 Gál, "Kétszáz éves a Krisztinaváros II.," 19.

105 Seenger, "Levél Buda 1849. évi ostromáról," 479.

the time. (...) Altogether, yesterday was probably the most terrible day for the fortress; innumerable shells were fired in, so that we hardly pay attention to grenades or cannonballs anymore.¹⁰⁶

The pumping station, the “waterworks” which supplied the castle with water from Víziváros, near the Buda end of the Chain Bridge, was of strategic importance to both Görgei and Hentzi, as there was no well inside the castle.¹⁰⁷ Thus, Hentzi, thoroughly preparing for the siege, reinforced the weak points of Buda Castle, which had previously fallen into decline, and had a palisade built to protect the waterworks, which he connected to the Buda bridgehead of the Chain Bridge.¹⁰⁸ Görgei hoped that by storming and destroying the waterworks, he would be able to force the surrender of the castle, since the garrison could hold out for no more than a few days without water. To his surprise, however, the first major assault on May 4 failed under fire from the castle cannons, and the siege was thus considerably delayed compared to his preliminary plans.¹⁰⁹

Alongside the descriptions of her feelings of fear and uncertainty, Anna Glasz’s letter also contains accounts of everyday life in the besieged castle. When there was no cannon fire, she suffered from a lack of food. Food supplies were evidently not unlimited in the besieged castle. The rations ordered for civilians were limited, and meat ran out as early as roughly May 8, so they could only get supplies from the soldiers’ stocks. Glasz offers the following description of the “daily routine” of the inhabitants of the castle and those that chose to flee:

The morning is usually fairly quiet, but around noon, the shooting starts with increasing intensity and usually lasts until after midnight. From 6 to 7 o’clock in the evening, all those who want to leave the fortress may do so, but only at the Water Gate. Mostly, it is women and children who leave. They are escorted by an officer to the palisades at the waterworks, which the Croats occupy. Beyond them stand the Hungarians, and the fugitives are left to their fate.¹¹⁰

The Water Gate (St John’s Gate in the Middle Ages), which made it possible to leave the castle, stood on the eastern side of the southern end of Dísz Square (towards the Danube). A week earlier, on May 7, a delegation from the city

106 Ibid., 480.

107 Hermann, “Heinrich Hentzi, a budavári Leonidász,” 55.

108 Ibid., 55.

109 Ibid., 56.

110 Seenger, “Levél Buda 1849. évi ostromáról,” 480.

council had approached Hentzi with a request to permit elderly men, women, and children to leave the castle. Although he had allowed this, he had also tried to persuade those who wished to leave to stay in order to avoid demoralizing the soldiers defending the castle. He had promised to do his utmost to protect them and compensate them fully for any losses they might incur. Nevertheless, hundreds of Buda Castle denizens left their homes from May 8 onwards.

Only two days after the end of the siege, on May 23, did Glasz move to the residence of the aforementioned Virozsil family in Krisztinaváros. She did not write a word about May 21, the day on which the Hungarians triumphed and recaptured the castle and Hentzi was mortally wounded. For Glasz, the end of the siege did not bring liberation. Her last entry, dated May 26, begins with the same words as her first, on May 11: “I am still alive.”¹¹¹ This similarity does not put what had happened into a reassuring framework. Rather, it reveals a state of anxiety that was still unabated. All the more, since, at the end of the letter, the repeated sentence no longer figures as a single, simple assertion, but rather is accompanied by the following explanation: “I am still alive; that is, I walk around, eat, drink, sleep; but my spirit is broken...”¹¹² During the siege, her home was half destroyed, and many of her possessions were lost.¹¹³ The metaphor can refer both to the destruction of the belongings in the badly damaged buildings by the impact of the cannonballs and to the idea that those belongings fell prey to the soldiers who, as Lilla Bulyovszky’s letter indicated, sold the objects looted from the buildings in the castle at a low price after the siege had ended. The letter concludes with a condensed summary of events. Having lived through the siege and having spent seven days and nights in a cellar, Glasz considers it a miracle that she survived.¹¹⁴

Summary

My study presented three different women’s accounts of the siege of Buda Castle in 1849: three different accounts in which, despite the different backgrounds and

111 Ibid., 479–80.

112 Ibid., 480.

113 Ibid.

114 Ibid. No accurate register of the number of civilian victims during the siege has survived. One of the most “renowned” victims was Mrs. Ferenc Bogács *née* Barbara Payerl, daughter of Royal Councillor Franz Payerl von Perleberg, retired director of the Registry of the Hungarian Royal Court Chamber; she was sitting by her breakfast table when she was killed by a grenade hitting her house (Spira, *A pesti éke Petőfi és Haynau között*, 524).

perspectives of the authors, there are many common elements. During the siege, the roles of the various districts became much more important on the mental maps of these three authors than in peacetime. The question of whether a given point in the city was within firing range of the Buda Castle, i.e. how much of a target it could be, how easily it could be hit by shells, became a fundamental issue. As many of the city's inhabitants were forced to flee, the focus in Pest-Buda shifted from the downtown area to the suburbs.

One essential consideration when using ego-documents as sources is the relationship between experience and text. In other words, one must remain aware that the events originally experienced and their narrated, constructed versions are never identical. When examining a mental map, this is a particularly pressing issue, since one cannot ignore which kind of source a given description of a cityscape is found in. Thus, research on the uses of space is closely linked to research on the uses of writing.

Emília Kánya remembered her 21-year-old self at the age of 75 and described her experiences of the city at that time in the framework of a narrative that she shaped into a story of escape. Her mental map is largely determined by a self-image centered on her maternal role and, as a result, her writing focuses on how she and her child sought escape routes in the menacing urban environment and how she tried to stay out of the siege's reach. The direction of escape through the different parts of the city (the downtown area, Terézváros, the City Park, and Kőbánya), with the movement flowing towards the suburbs, can be considered typical, but the choice of the nodes within these spaces (the medical university, the Commercial Hospital) was made possible by Emília Kánya's individual network of contacts. Her narrative also draws attention to the fact that social status fundamentally influenced the mode and destination of flight. She was able to leave the city as a wealthy bourgeois woman. Her child was looked after by a nanny, and they merely passed through the tent camp in the City Park, which for poorer townfolk was a destination. New nodes appeared on the mental maps of the authors of the analyzed ego-documents, depending on their life situations and objectives. For Emília Kánya, who wanted to leave the city, the railway junction at Kőbánya became important as a means of escape, as was true for many other wealthier citizens, and in her autobiography this featured as the site of an impressive mass scene. For Lilla Bulyovszky, who wished to correspond with her absent husband, the post office in the Üllői Road casern was a key node for communication. For Anna Glasz, in whose letter it was the

friendly rather than the familiar ties that dominated, the Krisztinaváros residence of the Virozsíls meant a crucial node and refuge.

The ego-documents on which I have based this discussion contain descriptions of a wide range of emotional responses to the events, which were experienced differently, depending on the varying family roles and political visions of the authors. When considered at the intersection of the study of nationalism and of emotional history, the texts emerge as expressions of three radically different mentalities. Emília Kánya, who went through the events as a mother, did not focus on her national identity during the siege, but rather on her family and urban identity. Her descriptions of the neighborhoods through which she traveled while fleeing are imbued with dread. She regarded every part of Pest as dangerous terrain in which the safety of her child was threatened, which is why she wanted to leave the city. However, her first impressions of her return after the siege were fundamentally shaped by her identity as a denizen of Pest and the pain she felt at the sight of the destruction of her native city. Although other parts of her autobiography show that she sympathized with the cause of the Hungarian War of Independence, she recalled the events of May 1849 without nationalist overtones, adopting a purely humanitarian stance.

In contrast, Lilla Bulyovszky's letters seem to offer the perspective of a young actress who prioritizes her patriotism and national identity and who considers the siege of Buda one of the most sublime and outstanding experiences of her life. Of the three ego-documents examined, hers is the only one in which positive emotions predominate. She addressed her letters to her husband from the position of a young, loving wife and a bold patriot fervently committed to the fight for freedom. For her, the city was the "stage" of a historic national event, which she wanted to follow as closely as possible, so the excitement and then the sense of joy at the Hungarian victory overwrote all other emotions. She used the banks of the Danube as an "auditorium" in order to see herself as part of the extraordinary event. And for her, Lipótváros, which she roamed after the end of the siege, was the sad "backdrop" that made her realize the serious damage caused by the bombardments.

The depiction of the city in the German-language letter by Anna Glasz, a loyal imperial subject residing in Buda, was shaped by a mixture of hearsay, incoming news, and the author's own experiences. The imagined and the experienced images of the city became intertwined in the letter. As she herself resided in Buda, the descriptions of Pest are more imagined, while the descriptions of Buda are drawn on experience. Unlike Kánya and Bulyovszky, Glasz was in

her home in Buda Castle throughout the siege. She also had to experience the destruction of a large part of her home, and she was compelled to seek shelter at a time when many other city dwellers were able to return to their homes. In her letter, which records the events of the siege simultaneously, as a series of signs, there is a constant shift of scale as she paints an image of the city. In one passage, we see the city and the castle in “extreme long shots,” while in another, we are given intimate “close-up,” but every passage contains references to the enormous scale of destruction.¹¹⁵

Although there is a rich literature on the military history of the 1849 siege of Buda Castle, an analysis of the ego-documents of women who lived through the events furthers a significantly more nuanced grasp of individual experiences of this phase of the War of Independence. The fact that these writings focus not on the frontlines but on the everyday problems in the “hinterland” (high prices, lack of food) is but one consideration. An examination of these women’s perceptions of the city and the emotions expressed in their ego-documents reveals how the unprecedented experience of war affected the mental maps of civilians. It also reminds us that research on the experiences of the denizens of the city does not exclusively belong to urban history. Any study of the theme of the “lived city” would ideally be connected with discussion of the “lived family” and the “lived nation.”

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115 Little research has been done on the sensory experiences of people who lived through or died in the wars of the nineteenth century. On the sensory history of the American Civil War, see Smith, *The Smell of Battle*. (One of the chapters analyses the reflections of a volunteer nurse, Cornelia Hancock, on the sense of smell.)

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