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Transition or transitions?

The transformation of eastern central Europe 1989–2007

"Incomplete regime change", "interrupted revolution", "geo-political paradigm shift"... Accounts of the transition in eastern central Europe have tended to be fragmentary, with particular features emphasised to the exclusion of others. In the first section of this encyclopaedic essay, Hungarian political scientist Elemér Hankiss pieces together a mosaic of interpretations of transition. Going further, Hankiss checks contemporary Hungarian society against Victor Turner's description of the "liminal society" — one caught between states of "normality". While there is much in Hungary today that supports the "liminality" theory — the predominance of tricksters, the calls for restoration of order — there is also much that departs from Turner's eulogy of change. Indeed, a "great regression" is taking place in the minds of members of transition societies, argues Hankiss, one that will take more than grand economic programmes to reverse.

By way of an introduction

A sign of the complexity of historical processes is the surprising diversity of ways in which, for example, the course of the events during the past decade and a half in Hungary and (with some divergences) other countries in eastern central Europe can be described and interpreted. No single interpretation gives a fully rounded explanation, but most point out important motifs. Bearing in mind that multiplicity of motifs, it seems fair to assume that when taken together as a mosaic, they trace a fairly faithful picture of that tangled and contradictory evolution.

Beyond any considerations of systematic research, an examination and determination of these attempted interpretations is important because they circulate unrestrainedly and ramble perilously in the general consciousness and public discourse. Since most only highlight a single partial motif from the history of the past decade and a half, they are highly amenable, on the one hand, to various political forces seeking to justify their own ambitions. On the other hand, by excluding all other interpretations, they distort them into misconceptions and make them sources of political passion.

In what follows I shall only be able to list the best-known attempts very sketchily, with the proviso that each calls for more thorough further analysis, and that it is necessary to work on a complex interpretation that gives appropriate weight and duly systematises the factors revealed by the partial analyses. The particular focus of this critique will be Hungary, but I believe that many of the observations made here will also, in many respects, throw light on what has happened in the other countries of eastern central Europe over the last fifteen years or so.

Attempts at an interpretation

Independence and new dependence

Hungary's rise from colonial or semi-colonial status to become an independent state once again was an important aspect of the last decade and a half. Important as that change was, though, it has relatively little explanatory power. For one thing, although the country did indeed regain *de facto* state sovereignty and broke loose from its dependency on the USSR, it is also true that the country's independence has been severely restricted by new factors: a combination of the European Union, the superpower status of the US in world politics, and the forces of the global economy. One limited sovereignty was exchanged for another. The dependence/independence dichotomy therefore has to be treated warily as an explanatory principle. One needs to define what has been lost on the swings and made up on the roundabouts; where Hungary has grown more independent and where the new dependencies have arisen, and how they are best handled.

Geopolitical paradigm shift

In an explanation that is somewhat allied to the preceding one, Hungary moved from one set of spheres of interest (the Soviet empire, Warsaw Pact, Comecon) to another (the American-European "empire", Nato, World Bank, IMF). It has been struggling with the socio-economic, political, and cultural problems of that realignment ever since.

These two successive spheres of interest were qualitatively different, but they resembled one another to the extent that it was as hard to deal with the former as with its successor. The Soviet economic sphere functioned badly, so relatively little benefit could be derived from that to offset the severe damage it inflicted. The Western system of dependency is far more efficient and offers greater opportunities, but the balance of powers is a good deal more complex and the competition is keener. Hungary started well enough but more recently it has slipped badly in its competitiveness. True, the huge gains that have been achieved in respect of non-economic goods — for example the exponential growth in personal freedom — have tipped the scales very much in the positive direction (particularly if one disregards the million-strong mass of people who have been the so-called losers of regime change).

Regime change

In part through internal prompting, in part under strong external pressure, Hungary in 1989 set about transforming its system of state socialism and crumbling planned economy into a democratic political system and open market economy. In the process of joining the global economy, Hungary suffered virtually every possible difficulty and misery, as well as exploiting a not insignificant fraction of the opportunities that opened up. Many people justly interpret this as a success story.

Incomplete regime change

Others acknowledge that regime change progressed rapidly at the institutional level. Basic democratic political and market economic institutions were established, and after a prolonged delay, sooner or later, a transformation of the institutional systems for health, education and government may also get under

way. All the same, if transformation not only of institutions but also of the ownership of socio-economic and political power that operates those institutions, as well as transformation of the nexuses of interest, are seen as organic parts of genuine regime change, then the process has not yet been completed, and in that sense probably never will be completed. A peculiar, messy mix of *ancien regime* and *nouveau regime* came about, which, on the one hand, made a peaceful transition possible, but, on the other, became a source of unhelpful disorders and conflicts. Or to put it in other terms:

Concordat/pact

The waning of Soviet pressure and the Hungarian Communist Party's loss of nerve made it possible for the circles of the ruling elite of state socialism to do a deal with a strange "coalition" of opposition intellectuals or professional people, reform-minded economists, management groups, and potential entrepreneurs who had previously belonged to the Party's sphere of interest but were becoming ever more critical of the Party. It may not have been as well thought through as, for instance, comparable deals in Spain, Portugal, or Ireland, but they entered a pact among themselves. Today the country is ruled by the alliance, the enmities, and the latent (as some would have it: complicit) co-operation of the old socialist ruling class and an upwardly mobile new middle class. Or in yet other terms:

The interrupted revolution

In truth, regime change that impinged upon the whole spectrum of ownership relations, the established spheres of power and interests, networks and privileges, as well as society's distortions and injustices, never took place. Some people accept that, arguing that even the successful revolutions of European history were not "complete". Others do not accept this and speak about a consolidation of power: not only was there no revolution, but there was not even a genuine regime change, because the former state socialist ruling class, by converting their political power to economic power, preserved and, to a great extent, reinforced that economic and later also political power.

"Revolution from above"

The term is an oxymoron, of course, but the concept still has some currency and implies that the ruling strata instigate and control processes that do indeed resemble genuine revolutions and lead to radical socio-political transformation. This explanation is more than a bit lame, though, because a true revolution — above and beyond politico-economic changes — in all likelihood would have transformed the structure of Hungarian society and its power relations to a far greater extent than it did. In Poland, the broad masses of society played a much larger part in preparing for the change (even though there, too, it was élite groups that in the end entered into the pact), and perhaps that accounts for why the party structure in Poland today is much more diverse and unstable than it is in Hungary.

Bourgeois revolution

What has been enacted in Hungary over the past fifteen years has been a middle-class rather than a civil revolution. Diverse external and internal forces smashed and blew up the state socialist regime and very speedily in its wake there formed an "upper middle class", which comprised the leading apparatchiks of the socialist regime, the red and green powerbrokers and their

hangers-on, and other nouveaux riches, political parvenus and their hangers-on, who emerged from other areas to rise to prominence in political and economic life. This new middle class behaves in much the same way as their nineteenth-century predecessor did: it strives for swift acquisition of wealth and maximal profits, and in doing so has distorted society's structure into something that is extraordinarily unjust, and — with due respect to the amazing exceptions — in a pretty heartless manner, socially speaking. Its rampaging has only been kept within bounds, to some degree, by the norms of human rights and the welfare-state spirit that had emerged by the second half of the twentieth century, along with those Western democracies that still stand for those norms.

Counter-revolution

Even more extreme is the interpretation which portrays the majority of those individuals who were in suitable positions after 1989, or who succeeded to such positions — as happened in Slovenia, for instance — as choosing the route of building up a non-welfare state and, by depriving society of all means of self-defence, delivering the country up (in the name of a politically neoconservative and economically neoliberal ideology) to the forces of international economic finance and their own greed. As beneficiaries of this, they assisted the country's "recolonisation" (this is also the point at which theories of global conspiracy come in). Admittedly, they did thereby kick-start a phase of rapid economic growth, and on the basis of the Reaganite "trickle-down" phenomenon, the middle class too gained a share of the goodies; but society's bottom third were pushed back again into a position of hopeless proletarian impoverishment. Hungary's current "restrictive measures" — maybe not intentionally but in effect — only further reinforce the process.

The rise and fall of democracy

Hungary began as a success story. Already adumbrated with the National Roundtable talks held in June–September 1989, a system of pluralistic, democratic institutions was outlined and from then on quickly implemented as a number of separate, autonomous authorities with a fairly good interplay of checks and balances, were built up. By the middle of the 1990s, however, the still very fragile democratic order was showing signs of strain: (a) it had not proved possible to move on from a parliamentary electoral democracy into a more widely based social democracy, and especially not into an interactive, "postmodern" democracy; (b) due to sharp splits in the political field the pluralistic democracy had increasingly degenerated into an "alternating single-party system"; (c) the political parties had become oligarchies and were significantly adrift from their bases in society; (d) the process of embourgeoisement, with the emergence of an enlightened citizenry conscious of its responsibilities, had slowed down.

Today, the hostility that is fanned between the political parties has poisoned, and is still poisoning, society's consciousness, intensifying latent aggressions, and reinforcing the hankerings of subordinates for a strong central authority and a charismatic leader; a segment of the political class and the administrative arm of government is corrupt, as a result of which domestic and foreign economic groups have been able to exert undue influence on the country's direction; as a result of the intensification of electoral contests, a populism that is a caricature of democracy has won ground on both sides of the political divide; the present economic crisis has dangerously strengthened the inclinations for a "reformed dictatorship"; the "branch of stewardship" that has

been established around the government is already eroding belief and confidence in democracy.

Seen in this light, and taking all the factors together, a very gloomy picture emerges, and the utmost should be done to reverse the trends. However, prophecies of the crisis and even collapse of Hungarian democracy are very exaggerated and, moreover, damaging. For one thing, Hungary's membership of the European Union is guarantee of the inviolability of a system of democratic institutions (they may be damaged or strained, but not done away with). Moreover, one positive effect of the present crisis may be that there is an acceleration of society's self-organisation, with a shift to a more responsible civil society.

Triple objective, success, crisis

Some people accentuate the point that during the last decade and a half Hungary had to, or needed to, solve three extremely difficult problems simultaneously. First, the state socialist system needed to be rebuilt into a democracy and market economy; second, the country had to become integrated with the European Union's system of political, economic and social institutions; third, it had to become integrated with the global economy. By the late 1990s, it looked as if the country was successfully meeting all three objectives, but in the last six or seven years Hungary has unexpectedly started to slide back, squandering part of the earlier gains and gradually becoming sucked into a serious crisis.

Evolution, a process of trial and error

Others have pointed out that there is no need for grand theories, and the fuss that has been made about the problems of the last decade and a half is unjustified. Societies are constantly changing and in a process of formation. While some stages of this process can be described as an evolution, or development, a great many problems crop up, some of which are successfully solved, some not. Therefore it is often necessary to start anew a search for other solutions. Democratic systems in most developed countries are likewise processes of struggle and conflict, which have their crises and upswings, their lulls and their restarts. The last fifteen years in eastern central Europe should be regarded as a similar trial-and-error process; at most all one can dispute, and is justified in disputing, without any big fuss, is the extent to which, on average, the attempted solutions were successful.

During the 1990s it looked as if in the sphere of economic development Hungary, in the context of East Central Europe, was coming close to the optimum, though the dangers and destructive forces inherent in the extreme version of the free-market model were present and discernible already then. In the last six to eight years, as a result of a series of mistaken political and economic policies, the country has fallen a long way behind the optimum, until it become bogged down in serious crisis that exists today. Politically speaking, too, Hungary made a good start, with the rapid establishment of a democratic system of institutions; but the "tribal" warfare that has been going on for more than a decade now has thrust that political achievement into a state of something close to pessimism. As I mentioned above, the transformation was, from the outset, slower than was required and that was possible. In greater detail:

Uneven development

The past decade and a half in Hungary has been characterised by the relative speed of politico-economic change and, by contrast, the sluggishness of social renewal. Strong external pressure and the suctional force of opportunities that opened up radically transformed the country's political and economic system. Social renewal, by contrast, failed to come about, or at least trailed, and still trails, far behind those processes. Admittedly, some significant social groups and strata were set in motion and accommodated to the situation by exploiting the new opportunities. The majority of the population, however, landing in tricky conditions, were unsettled and lost their sense of direction. People retreated into short-term survival strategies, put up with the changes, but did not, and still do not, have the strength, or perhaps even the chance, to grow up into a cohort of responsible citizens. The self-organisation of society, without which democracy can hardly function properly, has as barely got under way yet. As a result of all this, people became easy prey for the party magicians, who held out vain hopes and, by scaring people with terrifying images of the enemy, kept, and still keep, them on a tight leash.

Harmful continuity (Kádár redivivus)

A growing number of experts consider that many elements of the Kádár regime's economic practises, political mechanisms and forms of behaviour have survived what have otherwise been the major changes of the last decade and a half. The political regime that has emerged is taking on ever more the character of an "alternating single-party system"; the use of a cabal to drive politics has become standard practice; decision-making processes continue to be murky and the chance that society at large will have any part in decisions is minimal; the checking and balancing interaction of autonomous institutions is weakening; equality is deteriorating rather than improving; the feather-bedding of clientele is growing; "Easy there! everything is fine, trust us!", the siren song of Kádárism sounds from beyond the grave, "though admittedly, every leap year or so, we'll have to lovingly tighten your trouser belt a wee bit, but everything will soon work out just fine, just keep quiet, keep your head down, and remember: anyone not against us is for us..."

Drifting versus planning

A debate is in progress about the extent to which, over the last decade and a half, the countries of eastern Europe have kept a hold on and directed socio-economic and political processes, or the extent to which the transition has been one of drift. There is no denying the strength of the undertow of external forces, the Western powers and global processes. Other countries have rafted in these waters with varying success, with the Slovenes being the canniest at withstanding the backwash, but Hungary, then later the Baltic states and Slovakia, have made the most of any favourable headway. However, over the last five or six years, as a result of distorted political fighting, the irresponsibility of the political class, and a series of bad economic decisions, Hungary has drifted into a side channel that is dotted with shallows.

Some people consider that over the past decade and a half, *long-range processes* have been of greater importance than all the above factors.

Backwardness

A strong dampening and complicating factor over the past decade and a half is that Hungary (like most other countries in eastern central Europe) is still caught in the trap of a century or mire of backwardness, an urgent need to

catch up, and a general neurosis; it is still grappling with the legacy of East Europe's delayed and distorted modernisation (excessive centralisation, a bloated state, shortage of capital, overly hierarchic structures, snobbery, a cowed and passive society, pro forma democrats that lack a democratic society, etc.). In the absence of exposure, acknowledgement, and intensive treatment of these processes and problems, the leadership of the country will continue to be unpredictable and its feverish activity, always preoccupied with whatever problems happen to be uppermost at the moment, necessarily of low efficiency.

Fitful embourgeoisement

The slowness and discontinuity of embourgeoisement are also a major source of Hungary's current problems, a brake on its development. It is a fact that a process of embourgeoisement began among Hungary's lesser nobles, its gentry, back in the 1820 and blossomed more widely after 1867, with the emergence of a thriving peasant middle class. Between the two world wars, hundreds of thousands of fixed-income families, and, during the 1970s and 1980s, working-class and peasant families, made the transition to a lower-middle or middle-class standard of living, from which came a first-generation white-collar intelligentsia; after 1989 there then emerged a new bourgeoisie. Despite this, there was a decade and a half after the 1848–49 war of independence when that embourgeoisement of the lesser nobility came to a standstill, and then, after 1867, partly veered off in the direction of gentrification. After the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, Hungary lost the bulk of the towns that were the redoubts of its middle classes; then, in 1944–45, it lost a considerable proportion of its two most middle-class communities, its Jews and ethnic Germans; finally, after 1989, the Kádár-era lower-middle class was hit by economic crisis and began to re-proletarianise. Add to all that the fact that some feudal structures and subordination lived on until as late as 1945, and that a full one third of the country's population until the 1970s lived a lowly proletarian existence, then it is no wonder that the emergence (to the extent that it has emerged) of a self-sufficient, responsible civil outlook and comportment over the past decade and a half, without which no country can count itself truly European, has been so slow and difficult.

Globalisation

Some scholars have argued that globalisation is Hungary's main challenge, and the chief source of its problems today. Numerous internal problems also have to be addressed, but the real contest, whether people are aware of it or not, is going on with the inexorable forces and impacts of globalisation. Still weak fledgling economies such as Hungary's are especially susceptible to such destructive-constructive blizzards. The danger is further increased by the fact that eastern central Europeans have become unduly caught up in their own problems; they fail to see the wood for the trees, and in this case the wood is historical change on a worldwide scale — in economies, in political systems, in the international balance of power and relations, culturally and in day-to-day life. People may not see this, or at least they may fail to take it seriously enough (or at best use it as an alibi from time to time). However Western countries are also struggling with problems of sovereignty, the faltering of their system of democratic institutions, with the transformation of their own economies and the world economy, with the slashing of social safety nets, the growth of social inequalities, the emergence of a global proletariat, and the rapid alteration of their cultures. There is much, though, to be learnt from international examples, and through examples of willingness to address

one's own problems with less hysteria and more know-how.

Continuity

There is no need to have recourse to various philosophies or scientific theories (Bergson, quantum physics, string theory, etc.) to assert that history is not a series of states but a continuous intertwining and disentwining of processes, and although these processes bring into being constellations, mobile structures, *gestalts* that have a certain permanence about them (e.g. tribes, towns, states, eras, civilisations) these in themselves are subject to continual change, become absorbed into the flow of history, turn into other forms. If that is so (and it may well be), then in point of fact we are being arbitrary to speak about a transitional period between 1989 and, say, 2010, the transition between a configuration termed "state socialism" and a configuration termed the "democratic market economy". Hungarian society and the Hungarian state have been in a state of continuous change for centuries, shaped now and in the past by a thousand and one sub-processes, and even with such a striking event as, say, the declaration of the Republic of Hungary on 23 October 1989, time and the process of change move forward without a moment's hesitation. Such a "transition" does not have a fixed starting or end point, and we cannot say dogmatically that the process "began" in 1956, or the 1960s, the 1970s, or the 1980s, nor can we determine a presumable "end point", because the target notion of a Western-style "democratic market economy" is itself continually subject to change, changing as it dances ahead of us.

A great many things follow from this. Among other things, that it is indeed necessary for us to examine this era as part of a long-term, complex process. Possibly, taking "state socialism" and "democratic market economy" as the two end points of analysis was a poor framework and did not direct attention to the most important processes of change; it may be that looking back, a half century hence, this "transition" will not be seen as the dominant determinant of the era but rather, for instance — and it has already been referred to — the tidal wave of globalisation or the earthquake-like transformation wrought by Western civilisation on an unprepared, fragile country like Hungary. Or perhaps something entirely different that we are as yet unable to perceive or formulate.

Most analyses of the transition, as can be seen, rely primarily on economic historical, political scientific, and sociological methods. I could go on but I would rather present a less familiar approach to try and show how the theory of liminality of the cultural anthropologist Victor Turner can be adopted to analyse the process of change in which Hungarian society has been both subject and also actor over the past decade and a half. The reason why I have chosen this model is that Turner explicitly analyses the options and procedures of renewal for individuals and groups of individuals. Given that the real question in Hungary is the extent to which Hungarian society, alongside its political and economic institutions, has managed to renew itself, what the options are and what needs to be done in this area in years to come (an analysis which will in due course also draw on aspects from the history of ideas, psychology and social psychology).

Transition as "liminality"

In his book *The Ritual Process*,¹ Victor Turner asserted that there are periods of transition — "liminal" situations and processes — in the life of human communities and societies during which the now rigid

social–lifestyle–attitudinal structures that evolved previously slacken or break up and a process of destruction and creation starts: differences of social status and wealth or private interest disappear, and it becomes possible for a puritanical community that is full of creative energy to arise which, in a kind of creative burst, produces new forms, approaches and systems of human relations (Turner also refers to the liminal state as an "anti–structure). In Turner's view, it is primarily human groups that are living on the periphery of a larger human society, or are isolated within it, who are capable of this peculiar state of existing in the creative chaos of liminality. Examples of "marginal societies" include those supporting bygone tribal initiation ceremonies, participants in Dionysian celebrations or a modern–day carnival, and religious communities; among those who may live in a condition of permanent liminality are monastic orders, hippie communes, subcultures, prophets, "alternative" artists, and so on. These communities and liminal periods, according to Turner, are often extremely rich in symbols, myths, innovatory thinking, and new visions of the world, and they can become sources for the renewal of the existing social order, the structures that have evolved and rigidified, casts of mind, and systems of human relationships.

It is on these alternative communities that Turner concentrates his attention.² Though he does not exclude the possibility that entire societies might pass through such liminal periods, for example, following a sudden change in the environment of a given society, a war, or a great natural disaster, he does not look more closely at such cases and so does not differentiate the two types of liminality. Yet there may be highly significant differences between them. In the case of the distinctive, and in part marginal, closed communities that Turner mentions liminality does indeed often promote, or can help to promote, the growth of a communal spirit, human solidarity, new thinking, creative energies. Transitional periods that affect the whole of society, often attended by profound crisis, often work out in another way altogether. Collapse of the original socio–politico–economic structure and the extraordinary difficulty of establishing a new structure may place such a great burden on the society in question as to splinter it and distort the apprehensions and actions of members of that society. No *communitas* comes into being, social differences, far from disappearing, are aggravated, conflicts become sharper, creative energies do not truly gush forth, society is not permeated by a communal spirit but by the hullabaloo of private interests. The country or society in question may sink into a crisis so deep that for a long time it is unable to extricate itself at all, and even later only with great difficulty and without genuinely regenerating, without being able to bring into being a qualitatively better and better–functioning structure than it had before. To put it another way, there can be an overall negative as well as an overall positive version of liminality and liminal transition.

In my view, the past decade and a half in the history of the countries of eastern central Europe can be located somewhere between these two types of liminality. They are currently in a transitional state. Despite all the problems, they are progressing towards construction of a model that is positive rather than negative. But many elements of true socio–politico–economic renewal are still missing, and it is likely that they will be missing, for a fair time yet, from the process in every country of the region. That is precisely why it can be instructive to compare the contradictory process of east central Europe's transition with a few elements of Turner's model of positive liminality. This is what I shall be undertaking in what follows. In order to make the problems that are to be addressed stand out more clearly, I may utilise contrasts that are somewhat darker and sharper than is justified.

Transition between structures

During their transition, the countries of eastern Europe passed into a "liminal situation" in the classical sense, as proposed by Turner. They tumbled out of the "structure" of the socialist system and set off towards a new structure, that of the democratic–capitalist system. They had to shatter the institutions of state socialism then set about constructing a new set of institutions; then, after picking their way through the ruins and chaos, they had to adapt to the new structure. A perilous enterprise. To fall back on a metaphor, they had to leap off from the solid, albeit fairly precarious ground and jump into an unfamiliar, swirling river, and now, in the years to come, they have to clamber out onto the far bank. Not every country will make it at the same time and equally well. Hungary's chances, at the moment, are not looking particularly good.

Chaos

Turner presented numerous examples in which liminality is regularly attended by transitional chaos. The old institutions and networks are smashed and it takes time for new ones to emerge. To extend the previous metaphor, the new member states of the EU are trying to hoist themselves out of the slightly boggy disorder; like one of those herds of African wildlife that can be seen in TV documentaries, they have swum across a river and are trying to clamber onto the steep far bank. The Slovene gnu have managed to do so already, while the Estonian antelope have just about climbed out, with the Slovaks and Lithuanians pushing close behind. But the Hungarian buffalo has just slithered back on the slippery bank into the swirling current in which alligators are still lying in wait. It is cold comfort that the Romanian and Bulgarians are still flailing in midstream.

The initiators

"Initiators" play an important role in the transitional state of liminality; in the present case, not the elders and medicine men of tribal society that Turner describes, but those bearing no less power (magical and non–magical) in the European Commission in Brussels, the IMF, the World Bank, Wall Street, and a few other such institutions. They do, indeed, behave like the initiators of old: they are strict, at times ruthless, secretive, they chant eternal verities, will not be gainsaid, will put one to shame or threaten castration when necessary, they bind one hand and foot — all this in the firm belief, or on the excuse, that this is all in one's best interest: when the initiation rite is finished one will be able to step as an adult into the world of grown–ups. The process may be successful in the majority of cases, though the official initiators at many points around the globe have already ruined and permanently crippled a good many countries, societies and groups of people. Hungary, though, might come off better than that.

Shamans and prophets

It is common in transitional, liminal periods for irrational propensities to gain strength in society, for rational analytical and critical faculties to weaken. In such an atmosphere it is not uncommon to see the appearance of shamans, who cast a spell on their flock, or prophets, who preach about apocalypse and a new Jerusalem to come. In Hungary, Viktor Orbán and Ferenc Gyurcsány possess such gifts, though from time to time they seem rather to cut the figure of a sorcerer's apprentice, and one can only hope that the magic word which will stop the floodwaters will spring to their mind in time.

Tricksters

The confusion of the transitional period also tends to favour the appearance of "tricksters", those clever and cunning hobgoblins who played, and still play, an important role in the mythologies of innumerable civilisations, destroying and creating, playing the innocent and resorting to trickery, cheating or assisting, turning the world upside down and putting it to rights again; there is no way of knowing whether they are for us or against us, they can drive us to distraction or dazzle us with their tricks, make us miserable or happy.³ Even such an outstanding politician as Tony Blair has something of the air of a trickster about him: a charming, smiling trickster. On the far side of the ocean is Arnold Schwarzenegger as the giant trickster in the seven-league boots. In Europe Milosevic, Meciar, the Kaczynski brothers, Berlusconi and Putin would also stand good chances of bidding for that label, while in Hungary, too, several specimens of the type have cropped up, though out of prudence I shall leave it to the reader's imagination whom I have in mind.

Restorers of order

For Turner, restorers of order appear outside liminal communities and within official society. In Hungary, given that right here and now it is a matter of a transformation, a transition, of society as a whole throughout eastern Europe, people within society are raising their heads and believe that in the necessarily complex and chaotic process of the transition it is possible, indeed necessary, to create order at all costs, with strict ordinances, by administrative means and even, if need be, by force. "There must be order", and once there is order it means we have reached the far bank, the delightful environs of proper European countries. Naturally, order is required, but only order that does not strangle the spontaneous creative forces of the liminal era; to say nothing of the fact that restoration of order in itself will not solve a country's troubles. After all, a country that has been brought to heel can still be poor, can be marking time, or it may be sinking, standing to attention, in the marshlands on the periphery of Europe.

Communitas

Here the Turnerian comparison does not hold together, because what he writes in his exposition is that as long as people were living in their original, "normal" world they acted primarily as individuals, on the basis of their personal interests. When they find their place in the new structure, the new world, they again turn into individuals, become "individualists". In the chaotic, danger-ridden world of the intermediate, liminal period, however, people are dependant on one another; they join forces, become a *communitas*, and the spirit of interdependence and concerted action is reinforced. Turner intones a veritable paean for *communitas*. However there is little or no trace of such community-formation in Hungary over the last decade and a half, during the great transition period; quite the reverse, even today Hungarian society is still characterised, to a considerable degree, by an almost complete lack of communal spirit and collaboration, of communal solidarity. We watched with glassy eyes in the early 1990s as a million and a half fellow citizens took to the streets, and even today we still look on with indifference, caught up in our own anxieties, as tens or hundreds of thousands of others lose their jobs, barely lift so much as a finger to help them.

Not only is this morally repellent, it is also alarming with regard to Hungary's future, because what it suggests is that from this standpoint the "initiation", the

growing up into the new world, has failed. That is especially problematic because there is really no place for an atomised society — one in which life has become a free-for-all — in the community of European societies. Social solidarity, trust in one another, is just as much an indispensable element of a European society as a balanced budget or clean, flash, lightning-fast trains that are dead on time. And perhaps more important than even the rapid introduction of the euro.

Creativity and its absence

I have mentioned Turner's assertion that the creative energies of individuals and human communities bubble up during a period of liminality, with new thoughts, initiatives and experiments that enrich the age, make it exciting, and that fructify, or are capable of fructifying, society as a whole. The renewed faith of those who live in alternative religious communities, the new values of hippie communes, flower power and New Age adherents, the new songs, harmonies, and forms of pop music are obvious examples of this. From that point of view, the transition in eastern Europe has been very disappointing — or at least its Hungarian version, to stick to our own patch. People in Hungary were embarrassed when an outstanding expert from abroad declared — somewhat condescendingly, but with good reason — that the transitions in East Europe had created nothing, they had not come up with anything, they had not devised any new models or institutions, had brought no new perceptions, no new answers: everything had been copied from the West. Admittedly, one cannot expect a renaissance of film, music and the visual arts every two or three decades, but as far as new thinking, attempts to reinterpret the world or even the level of public discourse go, the desolation of the past two decades is distressing, especially as compared with the intellectual buzz of the 1980s.

Mute society

Turner describes *communitas* as being a community that is lively, humming, and rich in the exchange of ideas. Hungarian society today, by contrast — at least as far as public life is concerned — would more accurately be described as mute, or precisely the reverse: moaning, cursing, and shouting, as if people had forgotten how to speak to or argue with one another mildly, quietly, soberly. Or not even learned how to in the first place, since there have been few opportunities for learning how to conduct a civilised public discourse. For a century and more, leaders have been bantering one another, turning "Magyars" against Romanians, ethnic Germans, Roma, Slovaks and Serbs, Christians against Jews, Roman Catholics against Protestants, so-called "leftwingers" against "rightwingers". Undeniably, interests and beliefs are going to set people against one another, but it would be possible to discuss those interests and beliefs in a rational and considered manner if party politicking were interested in rational discourse and not uproar.

Identity and loss of identity

When a given world and social structure collapse, a substantial proportion, if not the majority, of the population will suffer from an unsettling of, if not an insult to, their sense of identity. Changes of social setting, disruption of networks, crises of confidence, loss of work, the devaluation of skills, the necessity to relocate — all these things can weaken and destroy people's sense of themselves, their self-identity. This process went ahead with dramatic force in Hungary over the past decade and a half.

True, a start has also been on the hunt for new identities; however, nowadays this is a slow and extremely laborious process and for many it has not succeeded as yet. They have become bogged down in a distressing and paralysing state of identity confusion or loss, while others, in their agony, have worked out *partial* identities for themselves and hang on to these tooth and nail. Such a partial identity might be an as yet ill-defined leftism or rightism, a religious affiliation or a pronounced nationalism. One's occupation or the position one has reached might equally be a source of identity. An occupation, if it is coupled with a true sense of vocation, can become a rich source of an enduring identity, but identities that are tied purely to a position usually carry a hollow ring. It is hard to forge a new, European identity, because that has to be reconciled with one's sense of nationality and, these days, citizenship of the world — something that is no easy matter, even for those who live in Western societies.

With the indigenous peoples described by Turner and others, at the end of an initiation rite a ready-made identity would be awaiting those who were being initiated: they were given a new name and acquired the rights, duties, self-awareness, and sense of identity of becoming adult members of the tribe. Those who conduct initiation ceremonies nowadays, however, in Brussels and elsewhere, do not concern themselves at all with the identity problems of the societies of eastern central Europe, helping them either not at all or at best only indirectly, for the most part by drilling them in the rules of the market economy game or democratic procedures. More problematic, though, is quite the reverse phenomenon: the way that the domestic political class, with the backing of much of the intelligentsia and press, are overly concerned, to a warped degree, with identity. Over the past decade and a half, issues of identity have found themselves, in a sad and distorted manner, at the centre of politics, or what passes for political discourse. Politicians, male and female, along with their swordbearers in the intelligentsia and press, argue about who is a good or a bad Hungarian rather than straining with every nerve and by all possible means that Hungary and Hungarian society should become a true European country and society with as little delay as possible.

Vision and blindness

In Turner's scheme, it is generally the case that communities that pass into a liminal state — and this is not limited to early Christian or Hassidic Jewish communities, for example — have genuine great perceptions, visions, about the past and present, the universe, the profundity of human existence. Today's Hungarian society, to draw a crude comparison, is characterised more by blindness — blindness because when it turns its back on the present and looks to the past, all it sees is darkness, or at best a murky jumble. It either does not know, or does not really know, what has happened to it over the decades that have gone by: a century of world wars, the treaties of Trianon and Yalta, the death camps and Gulags; a century of revolutions and counterrevolutions, bloody and sun-kissed Kádár regimes, and military treaties that yanked the country this way then that; a world of socialism, both inhuman and with a human face, of global capitalism, both inhuman with a human face; periods of poverty, growth and renewed impoverishment; a century of regime changes that were successfully negotiated and others that were muffed; an era of rights and illegalities, of hopes and losses of hope; a twentieth and early twenty-first century of not belonging and then belonging to Europe, of a radiant and a dark future. Nobody has explained to Hungary what happened to it and to Hungarian society in the course of the last decade and a half, let alone the last century and a half.

Progression and regression

Turner terms transitions "progressions"; that is, processes in the course of which a person or group moves ahead and upwards, leaves childhood to become an adult, finds a place in the world, gets ahead in a career, becomes more mature, wiser, livelier. This was seen in Hungary as in the transitions of other East Central European countries. In next to no time, Hungary switched from becoming a sickly state socialist regime into being a functional democracy (albeit one struggling with serious problems) and a tolerably well-running market economy. The country has become part of the Western world, a member of the European Union and of Nato, entered a diverse range of international networks, and, following decades of stagnation, set off energetically on a path of economic development, greater protection of human rights, and so on. Admittedly, there are some areas where the country has not managed to move ahead — indeed, it may have slid back. Thus, the socialist version of the welfare state is broken; the distribution of wealth has become more uneven; corruption, far from diminishing, has merely changed its spots and may even have increased; public finances have slipped further into debt, and so on. I choose not to go any further into these particular shortcomings and backslidings, but rather about the wide-ranging and dangerous regression that has occurred in the consciousness and attitudes of Hungarian society in recent years. It is possibly one of the most striking symptoms of the transition through which the country has passed during the last decade and a half — an element that has a big explanatory power. It is therefore worth closing the Turnerian view of the transition to take a separate closer look at this regression.

The big regression

Psychologists speak about regression as being a pathological process, so I am informed, when people are unable to cope with themselves or the world, and as a defence they revert to a chronologically earlier (e.g. childlike) state of mind or behaviour. This is exactly what happened over the past decade and a half with Hungarian society, or at least a substantial fraction of its population. In a world that has become ever more complicated, they have been incapable of taking care of the tasks that have been piling up in front of them; they have come to a standstill, recoiled and drawn back.

Numerous forms of this mass regression can be observed in today's Hungarian society, but before I list some of them, I ought to stress that most of them are not specifically Hungarian phenomena: they are present in other societies, including developed Western societies. There are two factors that make them particularly dangerous in Hungary, however. For one thing, for many decades, if not centuries, the country has been in a socio-economic and political situation in which most people had hardly any chance to grow into free, self-sufficient, responsible citizens. On the other hand, the country is right in the middle of a complicated transitional process in which it is particularly important — almost more important than in an already well-established developed country — that people behave in a very deliberate, grown-up and purposeful manner. The population cannot allow itself the luxury of regression, but — sadly — that is precisely what it is doing.

The symptoms of regression that are listed below are, therefore, fairly widespread in human societies, but they will be analysed here specifically in regard to Hungary. To begin, then:

Regression to a larval reflex

Many Hungarians, in their state of alarm, have shut themselves up, crawled into their shell, clammed up; they have no wish to see or hear what is going on around them, and having dismissed the outside world, even dismiss their own thoughts. The snail reflex is a somewhat milder form of this type of regression. Many of our fellow citizens have become supersensitive, cautiously sticking their heads out of their shells only every now and again, only to pull back in alarm, touchily and huffily, into the dark, steamy warmth of the shell.

Depression

"Now is the winter of our discontent," one might say with Shakespeare's Richard III. Both he and we have plenty enough reason for discontent. Nowadays it is customary to express this much less poetically, with "depression" having become a veritable national disease in Hungary (and, though perhaps to a lesser extent, elsewhere as well). In many cases the depression is truly an illness, but nowadays there are many who choose of their own accord to withdraw into this refuge of discontented torpor.

Panic

"I lost my head" denotes losing an ability to control one's life that human beings have striven for millennia to build up. One thereby regresses into an earlier, more defenceless, more helpless state, flapping and dashing around like a terrified horde of monkeys.

Paranoia

Paranoia is a particularly common form of regression: a retreat into mistrustfulness, a state of everyone being everyone else's enemy. Hobbes described it as being the fearful primitive state that held sway prior to the acceptance of the "social contract"; it is perhaps no accident that Hungary has yet to agree a social contract.

There are also many who have moved back into the *jungle*, or at least into a belief that they are living in a jungle — a world in which there is no law, there are no rights or duties, only force. A world in which he who is the stronger is the master. This belief is reinforced, day after day, by news items that incessantly drum home the triumphs of the strong and more aggressive — a message that is further reinforced by countless films and TV series in which, night after night, muscle-bound titans pummel, kick and rip one another to bits in the noblest (or vilest) Stone Age traditions. Most of us Hungarians, like many others the world over, watch this with near-ecstatic thrill.

Intellectual blindness

The process of regression is also accompanied by intellectual blindness. Some people make reference, in this connection, to the "closed mind" syndrome; or in other words, a person's loss of mental flexibility. People feel themselves to be weak and uncertain in the present confused period of transition. Instead of excitedly searching for new thoughts and solutions, as Turner's model would suggest, they cling on tenaciously to the predigested "truths" that have served them up till now, to their increasingly anachronistic beliefs and misconceptions. They dare not let go of their reference points, have no wish to listen to new thinking; they are incapable of changing and hold for dear life to their convictions. It is everybody else who is mistaken, or else deliberately, with malice aforethought, falsifies the facts.

Retreat into the family

Withdrawal into the family is one of the commonest forms of regression (throughout the world, but perhaps particularly in Hungary in its present situation). For many people today "[his] frontier is the garden wall, the chicken coop, the cellar door....," to quote a phrase from the poet Dezső Kosztolányi, and they do not see, nor wish to see, beyond that, beyond their back yard, and do not concern themselves with, do not know or wish or dare to concern themselves with, the world. They busy themselves diligently with and around the family in order not, even for a second, to have to look out into a "foreign world".

Retreat into the herd

More dangerous still is regression into the herd — an Ionescu-style herd of rhino. This was the greatest, most shameful and most destructive regression of the twentieth century. Hundreds of millions felt they were weak, or even nothing at all, so they made a compact with the "mob", found refuge in the warmth of the herd, compensating for their non-existent personality with their herd mentality and becoming, willy-nilly, accomplices to murderous powers. After 1989, there was a faint chance that Hungary would advance from crawling around on all fours and stand on its own two feet, shouldering the risks and precarious joys of independent, self-sufficient, grown-up human existence. It was disappointed, however. New terrors of a disintegrating world, and the hatreds that sprang from those terrors, very soon herded Hungarians — at least very many of them — into the corral of some newfangled eastern herd, movement, party and world view. Their — our — personality, independence and civil dignity lamentably shrivelled up.

Retreat into the past

One can retreat to the past as well, and in various ways at that. The past may be, for example, a never-never "golden age", such as the Kádár regime or the Horthy era, or some other glorious national past, shrouded in the golden mists of time. If the reason that people were immersed in the past was to gather strength for the future, then that would not be a bad tactic; but it is usually about nothing more than empty nostalgia, a clinging-on to the wreckage of the past that is hindering the building of a future.

Regression into *childhood* is akin to this, a sinking back into infantile irresponsibility, peevishness and sulking. During the Sixties and Seventies I wrote about the mandatory infantilisation of Hungarian society, the atrophy (or concealment) of a responsible, self-sufficient civil conduct of life. In 1989 I thought that we had, at long last, managed to get over that crawling around on hands and knees, babbling and bib-wearing. I was wrong: there are many signs that a new infantilism is flourishing in Hungary.

Among such infantile traits are *grousing* and sulking. Many people in Hungary seem to spend their lives eternally grumbling and moping, instead of acting like a grown-up should and having a go at changing the world. Some have chosen a more comfortable form of regression in becoming *couch potatoes* and dampening their distress with pot noodles, mountains of pasta and chocolate. Or think of the doltish burbling that goes on in a multitude of TV shows, the all pervading fashion for games, parlour games, sports games, and quizzes (there has never before been an age in the history of Western civilisation when adults played as much, day after day after day). One might also point to

hedonism, the pursuit of pleasure, that other defining feature of consumer culture; the pleasure principle, the compulsion for instant gratification of desires, at any cost, once used to be a form of behaviour that was typical of children only. These are all global phenomena, but in Hungary, as I have already said, they tend to play a more negative role than they do in civilised, developed countries.

Flight into the instinctual world

One can also flee into the instinctual world. The sexual revolution of the 1960s, for instance, was undoubtedly a liberation, a breaking through of the barriers behind which Western civilisation had inordinately repressed sexual desire. From another standpoint, though, it had, and still has, an element of regression about it, of regression to a pre-civilised state, because it is common knowledge that the concept of civilisation is inseparable from an element of regulation, of limiting or "curbing". In consequence, it is a "civilisation" that round the clock proclaims the possibility of finding, even makes it an injunction to find, near unlimited satisfaction of desires, or in this respect at least questions its own civilising nature. Of course every civilisation has had its longer or shorter periods — weeks, days, months (Dionysian revelries, "carnivals", etc.) — when instincts were given release from this controlling order, but the "never-ending carnival" of the modern-day consumer society is now starting to pry apart any frame of civilisation. I could not say if the element of regression is more strongly present, for example, in the sexual cult in Hungary than in the West, but sexual freedom certainly must have come (and comes) at an opportune moment for those who are seeking a refuge from life's troubles and cares.

Flight from oneself

People also have the option, if they feel themselves to be tortured by life's problems, of freeing themselves from their self, their personality. It is simplest to recede into such an ego-less condition by the means of alcohol. Indeed, the high level of alcoholism in Hungary is no doubt a symptom of the Great Regression that is being examined here, though here we are more concerned with the centuries-old practice of regression, as older eras also had reason enough for people to retreat into an unconscious stupor from the multitude of the world's miseries and strife. There are, of course, other, milder but no less effective methods, and then again one can obtain release from one's personality by relinquishing it, dismantling or, so to say, "dissipating" it. One way of achieving the latter, for instance — if one does not wish to face life, or the problems and opportunities that life offers, as an adult person — is literally to dissipate one's life and oneself, "fritter" them away. This is particularly easy nowadays, because modern-day civilisation, consumer culture, is urging us non-stop to do just this: forget yourself and the world. Don't you worry about a thing: enjoy life, have fun, dissipate yourself in life's colourful whirl.

Flight into irrationality

For many people, both in Hungary and elsewhere, the world has become so snarled-up, so complex and incomprehensible, that after several centuries of the unfolding of enlightened reason and understanding we are increasingly prone to flee back into the *twilight of irrationality*. The tremendous fashions for parapsychology, astrology, myths, New Age "thinking" and so on are just one sign of how much adult rationality is now on the ebb. If I may refer to just one example of this, a search for the keyword "occult" on Amazon's internet

merchandising website will offer the following subjects: astral rays, aura and colours, crop circles, cults and demonism, ESP, extraterrestrial beings, kabbalism, magic, magic potions, metaphysical phenomena, occultism, parapsychology, Rosicrucianism, Satanism, shamanism, spiritualism, the supernatural, UFOs, unexplained mysteries, witchcraft.⁴

It is clear, then, that the fashion for the irrational is not a Hungarian speciality (Hungarians are also consumers of the products of international irrationality industry). But in view of the country's difficult position, it would be particularly important that its citizens display a measure of self-constraint, because now, more than ever, there is a need for every sound thought, for reason, for sensible, sober-minded collective assessment.

Regression to an aggressive state

The more dangerous course, if not for their own sake, then for everyone else, is for people to regress to the aggressive state and to break, smash and ruin, to take out the pain of their powerlessness and frustrations on others. This stepping-back into a world of Stone-Age rage is one of the most widespread forms of regression in Hungary today, one that almost all of us suffer from, to a smaller or larger degree. We clatter noisily by in the crowd, like our ancestors once did in the bush, charging almost like enraged rhinoceroses at the cars that are inching along in front of us, "hitting the ceiling" if something does not happen at once to our liking, exploding with murderous passions if anyone happens to cross us.

Blindness to the future

Blindness to the future is also a symptom of regression. We cover our eyes, not wishing or daring to look into an uncertain, unknown future. One can always retreat into indifference, into hopelessness. If no way out is seen, no option, then one can counter the pain of futile hoping by muffling oneself in a voluntarily accepted creed of hopelessness. "There's no hope," we can lament with the poet, and that in itself lessens the pain; and if we are able to ennoble this muffled hopelessness into philosophical resignation, then we may even be proud of ourselves.

Cynicism

It is also possible to retire behind the bastions of cynicism. If we manage to convince ourselves that there is not, and cannot be, anything of value, nothing good, no integrity, no humanity in the world, and everybody steals, cheats and lies, then the lack of values and valuable people does not hurt so badly. This cynic's attempt at self-therapy can, in any event, be regarded as a regression, if one believes those philosophers — and no small number of philosophers fall into this category — who take the view that an honourable, free, dignified life is nevertheless still possible.

Martyrdom

Another pleasant refuge is a sense of martyrdom. One may still recall the many individuals, both in Hungary and elsewhere in the region, who accepted the role of martyr in the 1950s and 1960s, sacrificing their lives, their safety, their careers in the fight for some holy cause. These days, though, holy causes have either faded or vanished altogether, and nowadays even evil powers have pulled on velvet gloves over their claws, presenting themselves as so smooth

and polite that it is hard to get any purchase on them. Although there is very little chance or call for true martyrdom, many people withdraw into this pose, into the role of the unjustly suffering, high-minded individual whose lot it is to suffer. There was a time when the acceptance of martyrdom was a brave protest that sought to build a new world over against a wicked and culpable world; now the role of the individual who takes flight from the world is that of someone who is seeking a halo as some kind of indemnification for their failures.

Self-handicapping

The English-language literature speaks of "self-handicapping" as a strategy of regression. One should think of a sportsman or woman who has not trained properly for their next race. That inadequate training may lessen the chances of winning, but at the same time it is an obvious excuse in the event of failure. Self-handicapping, or to put it another way: a failure-avoiding (as opposed to success-driven) mentality typified many Hungarians (and probably populations right across eastern Europe) in the 1970s and 1980s, for perfectly understandable reasons, too, as on the one hand there were few opportunities for genuine success, and on the other, success, or standing out from the crowd, had its own dangers. In many cases, then, failure-avoidance was a wise tactic.

During the last decade and a half, a multitude of opportunities have opened up. This is both a good thing and a bad thing, because, for on the one hand, the chances of success are increased and its risks are reduced, but then on the other hand, there are no excuses (or less room for them), which means that people have to search for the reasons for failure in themselves. In order to avoid such a painful humiliation, many people are inclined to self-handicapping: instead of giving their all in the interests of success, they prefer to retreat into a condition of the helpless, unfortunate individual who has been stricken by circumstances.

Retirement into one's own backyard

Retiring into one's own backyard, among the beanstalks, the snapdragons and apple trees, is another option. It was a masterstroke of the Kádár regime to hand out small allotments (though not plough land), for nothing, or next to nothing, to many hundreds of thousands of families. This was not land reform but, in reality, something more like a masterly "brain reform". Virtually at a stroke, it managed to turn cantankerous, bitter, malcontent, unpredictable, vocal, argumentative and unhappy proletarians, who were demanding change and arguing as much in the street and bar rooms, into peaceful, predictable and contented petty-bourgeois citizens. The big truth was grasped that anyone who owns a garden is not going to have any spare time to spend in the street or the bar arguing the toss about politics, being discontented and vilifying the regime; he will not be an erratic, quarrelsome element, but a reliable gardener, if only because one can predict, for example, when apple trees have to be pruned or pesticide sprayed (and those things cannot be put off for any rowdy demonstration) — indeed, people won't have time anyway, what with having to chase around for the materials needed to build a tool shed or a shack in which to spend one's weekends. A proprietor of an allotment is no longer waiting for political change but for rain or sunshine; he has no time for "rallies" — at most just the odd minute or two to lean on his spade and exchange a few words with his neighbour, and even then not in order to argue over politics but which weed-killer is best; he is not going to curse the regime but the weevils and the moles; he drinks his own home-brewed drink under a

walnut tree rather than going to a smoke-filled, raucous bar. In short, self-respecting, belligerent, politically opinionated working- or middle-class citizens voluntarily and peacefully relapsed into the pristine condition of an idyllic garden of Eden. (I shall say nothing about the fact that this is regression purely from the standpoint of public life, because from another point of view the allotment is an excellent proving ground for an adult, responsible, reflective personality.)

To draw this to an end, one may conclude that Hungary's citizens, academics, and leaders most certainly ought to concern themselves with regression at the society level as being a severe pathological sign and an important sequela, symptom and etiological principle of the past decade and a half of transition. Grandiose economic programmes are not going to be enough in themselves, after the winter of our discontent, to bring on the spring of our contentment.

I have listed in the foregoing many of the phenomena, constituent elements, tendencies and, at the same time, explanatory principles that characterise the decade and a half of transition in Hungary (and to some degree central eastern Europe more generally). It is more than likely that all of them, intertwined and to differing degrees, have played a part in shaping this complex process. Different researchers emphasise now one, now another as being the primary factor; I, on the other hand, take the view that they all require close study, much closer than hitherto, but that a concerted analysis may succeed in delineating a genuinely nuanced picture of this complex transitional period.

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- ¹ Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books; 2nd ed. Ithaca N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977.
 - ² Van Gennep in his standard work — Arnold van Gennep: *Les rites de passage; étude systématique des rites de la porte et du seuil, de l'hospitalité, de l'adoption, de la grossesse et de l'accouchement, de la naissance, de l'enfance, de la puberté, de l'initiation, de l'ordination, du couronnement des fiancailles et du mariage, des funérailles, des saisons, etc.* Paris: É. Nourry, 1909 and its English translation: *The Rites of Passage*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul and Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1960 — confined himself to an analysis of ancient initiation ceremonies.
 - ³ In a superb essay, Ágnes Horváth has analysed the role of the trickster in East European politics. Based on the speeches he made in Hungary, she allocates to Mátyás Rákosi the role of a trickster of the extreme negative type.
 - ⁴ Just to list (in no particular order) the titles of a few of the edifying volumes on the shelves of American bookshops: *Advanced Candle Magic, Talking to Heaven, The Hidden Truth of Your Name, Numerology, Tarot Basics, How to Stir a Magic Cauldron, Green Witchcraft, The 21 Lessons of Merlin, Celtic Wisdom, Everyday Karma, The New Revelations, The Art of Shen Ku, The New Chinese Astrology, Astrology for the Soul, Technology of Gods, Atlantis, The Secret Doctrine*.

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