

## Why Is There No “Sixth Eclogue”?

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Among great artists of any period, Miklós Radnóti must be counted in the ranks of those whose careers came to a close during their tender years; nevertheless, as Emil Lichtenberg has written so aptly of Mozart, “the giant arc of his life makes a whole.”<sup>1</sup> The sole dissonant chord that disturbs the harmony of Radnóti’s great trajectory, and renders the wholeness of his life’s work problematic to this very day, is the lack of a poem number six in that distinguished series of eclogues in which the poet speaks of and to the times, with Vergilian naturalness, with a greatness transcending poetic diction. The lack of a “Sixth Eclogue” is not only disturbing; let us admit it freely: it is also painful. With hidden lyrical feelings we confront the mutilated series, and make attempts to fill the gap. Stillborn and yet alive, that “Sixth Eclogue” is hiding, it must be hiding somewhere among the eleven poems written between the “Fifth” and the “Seventh.” How very much Radnóti scholarship wishes to recuperate from this sense of hurt is clear from an essay by Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel, in which the great classicist identifies as the “Sixth Eclogue” Radnóti’s poem fragment dated 19 May 1944.<sup>2</sup> My present paper considers all pertinent arguments; in fact, it calls attention to several additional poems not discussed in this connection to date. Its aim, however—and in this it departs, in substance as in method, from previous work—is not to determine which poem constitutes the “Sixth Eclogue,” but to attempt to answer the question put in the above title: why is there no such work?

In textual criticism of the modern period, symptoms of wishful thinking associated with aspirations of textual completeness show most readily in places where one sets about organizing any portion of a poet’s literary estate for book publication. Nothing that is fragmentary can or should become a book (with notable exceptions; with Sappho we have no choice). That it was most probably Radnóti’s own wish to realize, at some fitting point in

the future, a separate volume from his series of eclogues (as he indeed did from the series of his *Calendar* poems (1942)), seems evident from the fact that, almost as an afterthought, he wrote a poem to the series in 1942. This is the magically festive, yet tragically attuned “*Száll a tavasz...*” (Spring is in Flight). The presence in the series of this exuberant poem conjures the ideal of completeness to such extent as to render the continued absence of a “Sixth Eclogue” a patent, and in any event an unbearable absurdity. In the course of the years following World War II, 1961 saw the fulfillment of Radnóti’s wish; at this time, under the imprint of Magyar Helikon, the eclogues became a Liliput volume entitled *Eclogues*, edited by Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel and beautifully illustrated with drawings by Piroska Szántó. In the afterword to the volume, the editor writes of the problem of the missing “Sixth” as follows:

No poem bearing the title “Sixth Eclogue” has emerged from Radnóti’s estate; on the other hand, we cannot—knowing the marvellously careful manuscripts of poems he wrote even during the days immediately preceding his martyrdom—assume that Radnóti could have forgotten the series number at which, back home, he had interrupted the writing of the eclogues. Thus we must either believe the “Sixth Eclogue” to be lost, or—what is more probable—that the poet had intended as number six of the cycle that untitled fragment which survives with the dating 19 May 1944. This—in contrast to “Fifth Eclogue,” whose fragmentary nature is mere form, that is, a perfect instrument of expression serving the contents—is a fragment in the literal sense: it remained without an ending or a title, since on the day following, on 20 May 1944, he was called up for military labour service once again, a tour from which he did not return home. The total lack of bucolic symbolism in this fragment does not contradict our assumption; after all, hardly a trace of this could be found in “Fourth Eclogue,” and not the least evidence of it in “Fifth.” Supporting our thesis stands, however, its Old Testament allusion (to the prophet Isaiah in the last line), which to a certain extent connects it with “Fourth Eclogue,” and prepares “Eighth.”<sup>3</sup>

The poem dated 19 May 1944, known to us since the appearance of Radnóti’s posthumous volume *Tajtékos ég* (Sky

with Clouds) (1946) under the title “Fragment,” does in fact receive space in the *Eclogues* volume of 1961, as the lost “Sixth Eclogue.” Trencsényi-Waldapfel’s view and editorial practice are corroborated by those of Pál Réz, who, summarizing his predecessor’s arguments in the afterword to his own *Eclogues* edition of 1979, adds: “...important additional proof is constituted by the fact that—as Tibor Melczer has noted—the (poem) ‘I lived on this earth in an age...’ is in essence a further elaboration of the Vergilian motto heading ‘First Eclogue,’ that is, an application to Radnóti’s age, to the war years....”<sup>4</sup> Tibor Melczer, in his 1974 Budapest dissertation, notes that in the penultimate line of “Fourth Eclogue” the phrase “your anger’s smoke” is likewise of prophetic impact and of biblical origin: it alludes to Chapter 30, verse 27, of The Book of Isaiah.<sup>5</sup> Although Melczer’s observation dates from 1974, matters did not need to progress even this far in order for the view to find an echo in Radnóti scholarship done outside Hungary. As early as 1965, that is, four years following Trencsényi-Waldapfel’s edition of the *Eclogues*, B.S. Adams wrote: “The Sixth Eclogue is lost as such, although it is commonly held that it exists under the title of *Töredék*.”<sup>6</sup> Although in the notes to my second Radnóti volume I wrote a reply to this view, I now feel it insufficient to answer merely, as I do there: “...the lack of a ‘Sixth Eclogue’ does not injure the existing series; in fact the position of the lacuna only certifies its sense of appropriateness.”<sup>7</sup> For even if this is true, as it is also true that Shakespeare’s set of sonnets is not damaged by the fact that one of its members (Sonnet 126) contains only twelve lines, the best way we can investigate our problem is by considering, as directly as possible, the poet’s will and his fate. It is important for us to attempt to gain an insight into the shop secrets of the conscious artist.

The first secret of which I am thinking is that, if we must look for a “Sixth Eclogue” at any price, perhaps we could consider other poems as well. In order to do this with conviction, we must stress what I have felt for some time, namely, that the poem dated 19 May 1944 does not at all occupy a privileged position among imaginable—and defensible—candidates for the honour of being identified as the missing piece. However irreverent this may seem, I am sorry to have to report that Trencsényi-Waldapfel’s arguments do not convince me. The poem which bears the date 19 May 1944 is a fragment in historic

fact only; in form, it is anything but that. It consists of five perfectly constructed five-line stanzas, each beginning with an anaphoric refrain (a feature which, we must admit, brings the poem close to the sign system of “Third Eclogue”)<sup>8</sup> As to the total lack of bucolic symbolism, this is not at all the case for either “Fourth Eclogue” or “Fifth”; we can find, in both these earlier eclogues, rich images of nature and suggestions of the pastoral. In “Fourth Eclogue” such features are prominent especially in the second speech by “Voice” and in the stanzas spoken by “Poet” immediately following; in “Fifth Eclogue” we need but read the lines mirroring the fate of Radnóti’s mourned friend, György Bálint: “Do you take walks in the leaves, in the forest muck; thick perfume, or / are you a fragrance yourself?” as well as the forest and blizzard images of the entire poem.

Over and against this, the impressive Isaiah allusion closing “Fragment” connects the latter not necessarily only with eclogues (there is, in any event, only one eclogue casting the role of a biblical prophet, the “Eighth”). Let us only recall the poem “Marginal Note to the Prophet Habakkuk” (in the verse collection *Meredek út* (Steep Road, 1938), as well as, in an even wider and more significant context, all of Radnóti’s poems and prose works containing biblical allusions.<sup>9</sup> That, *in extremis*, in a poem written on the eve of his last reporting, the poet should permit himself a biblical reference, is understandable even apart from the logic and poetics of the work. The sole, really convincing, connection of the “Fragment” with the eclogues—something that Trencsényi-Waldapfel does not mention—is its addressing the times, the terrible historic age in which it is conceived. Here I agree with Melczer, namely, that the diction of “Fragment” relates it to Vergil’s *First Georgic* and with the motto, taken from it, to Radnóti’s “First Eclogue.” This rhetoric can, however, be found equally easily in the poem “Walk on, Condemned!,” as well as in numerous other poems which would truly deserve to be regarded as forerunners of the eclogues.<sup>10</sup>

If we look closely at the incomplete series—that is, only at “Spring is in Flight...” and the seven existing eclogues, entitled such by the poet—we may discover two dominant formal tendencies governing them. An eclogue “accepted” by Radnóti may be written in dialogue form only, but not in dactylic hexameters (“Second,” “Fourth”), in hexameters but not in

dialogue (“Spring Is in Flight...,” “Third,” “Fifth,” “Seventh”), or in both (“First,” “Eighth”). An eclogue satisfying neither of these two formal criteria—one written, for example, in alexandrines and not in dialogue—has not survived. All this naturally does not imply that such a poem could not have been written, had it occurred to the poet to add such an eclogue to the cycle. The decision not to write every eclogue in dialogue form has its source in Vergil, in whose series only the odd-numbered poems obey this law. Relaxing this constraint a bit further, Radnóti could have arrived at the point of view that the dactylic hexameter line—which tradition and courtly convention oblige Vergil to use—should itself find an alternate in some other prosodic pattern favoured by the twentieth-century poet. Evidence, however, points to Radnóti having drawn the boundary line between the permissible and nonpermissible at this point. Naturally, an imaginable objection to such an argument would be that such regularity can be very deceptive, especially since, statistically speaking, eight poems could hardly form the basis for a reliable computation of probability. In place of attempts at inductive logic, we would do better to consider the will and unceasing artistic experimentation of the living poet. If we switch to such a point of view, there opens before us the possibility of taking into consideration poems other than “Fragment,” as fully entitled candidates for the distinction of being named the crucial “Sixth Eclogue.” I am especially thinking of two poems Radnóti wrote during the early months of 1944: “I Cannot Know...” and “They Just Couldn’t Bear It....”

Both poems address the epoch, in their own ways; they say “no” to the poet’s age, as “First Eclogue” expresses it. That the world of “I Cannot Know...” is from several points of view a continuation and elaboration of that of “Second Eclogue,” that the two poems resonate in mutual sympathy, is observed also by Trencsényi-Waldapfel.<sup>11</sup> The poetry of “I Cannot Know...” is the language of the pained rhetoric of love of the fatherland. It pairs the guilt of a nation involving itself in tragedy with the world of feeling of the poet in love with the “tiny flutters,” familiarities, of home. It has been said of this poem that in twentieth-century Hungarian poetry it is the closest correlate of Vörösmarty’s “Szózat” (Oration), and it is surely no accident that in “I Cannot Know...” the home of Mihály Vörösmarty is so unforgettably mentioned. Besides this, one also seems to overhear

something from the “Hymn” of Ferenc Kölcsey, specifically in the closing lines of “I Cannot Know...”; I am thinking of the lines that speak of a people’s capacity for atonement, of that critical “This nation has already atoned/ for past and future as well” (“Megbűnhődte már e nép / A múltat s jövődöt”). Here, I believe Radnóti to have known Babits’s Dante translation too well, to decide unqualifiedly on Kölcsey’s side in the question of whether or not his nation has already atoned for the future. In canto 27 of *Inferno*, the Tuscan Ghibelline leader, Guido da Montefeltro, completing the tale of his conspiracy with Pope Boniface VIII, puts the following words into the mouth of his dark angel, the devil versed in logic: “Absolved uncontrite means no absolution; / Nor can one will at once sin and contrition, / The contradiction bars the false conclusion” (lines 118-120; trans. Dorothy L. Sayers).

Next to this unmistakable moral position, the fitness of “I Cannot Know...” for eclogue candidacy is further enhanced by its imagery. That person who flies over it in a plane is akin with the pilot who in “Second Eclogue” converses with the poet, even if the former has no opportunity to learn of the crucial difference between his map and the finely detailed nature of the real landscape. Toward the end of the poem people are “hidden away in dark cellars”; this lets one anticipate the horror of the bombings, as this is clarified in its full weight in the language of “Second,” “Seventh,” and “Eighth Eclogues,” in fact even in “First Eclogue,” where similar passages refer to the military conduct of the Spanish Civil War. True to the eclogues, “I Cannot Know...” also speaks to contemporary issues, of the poet’s fellow humans, of “workers here, and poets too, innocent, / and suckling infants in whom there grows intelligence”; the poet speaks, “in rebelling, of others, and (does) it selflessly” (“Not Memory, Nor Magic”).<sup>12</sup> Next to the identical metrics, the *Nibelungenlied* line, in which most of “Second Eclogue” and all of “I Cannot Know...” are written, the visual form of the text of the latter poem, written in a single block rather than being divided into stanzas, also follows the poetics of “Second Eclogue.” It is well known that of all the eclogues this early example contains the least number of speeches—both “Pilot” and “Poet” speak twice only.

Nor are the eclogue-like qualities of “They Just Couldn’t Bear It...” called into question by a single disturbing feature or

circumstance; if anything, this later poem seems an even more convincing contender than was its predecessor. "I Cannot Know..." does immediately follow after an existing eclogue ("Fifth"), whereas the distance between "Fifth Eclogue" and "They Just Couldn't Bear It..." is two poems, exactly the number that separate "Third Eclogue" from "Second." But something that is far more important, in fact shockingly apparent, is that, like "Fifth Eclogue," "They Just Couldn't Bear It..." is also a requiem poem. In it the poet mourns his close friend, the painter István Dési Huber (1895-1944). The series of images occurring in the dignified poem, which in this work refer to real pictures by the artist: "cattle, horse, worker, poet..., / church...in your home village of Dés" (lines 11-12), furthermore, "coffin, pitcher, / firewall" (lines 23-24), seem to conjure before us a bucolic effect felt through the achievements of painting.<sup>13</sup> But bucolicism of this genre is no longer univocally the instrument of landscape mood, exclusive of environments created by man, any more than the bucolic presuppositions of "Third Eclogue" or of "I Cannot Know..." are that. After all, the innovative power of the bucolic poet in "Third Eclogue" is made manifest precisely in the fact that it is a question of an "urban bucolic"; the poet is sitting in a café and can make us believe that this is that appointed *locus amoenus* within which the pastoral muse can come to his aid. In this sense the painter's muse too was the creative spirit of village and meadow, as well as of city and factory.

Of an equal rank with bucolic allegiance thus won from the artist's vision, the capacity of "They Just Couldn't Bear It..." to address the age surpasses perhaps even that of "Fifth Eclogue." It is, of course, true that the moral significance of the latter resides precisely in that choked-off pain, owing to which the poet proves incapable of writing a "finished" poem about his dear friend, the journalist and writer, György Bálint (1906-1943), missing, then dead in the Ukraine. If we think of how very much Bálint was a man of the word, of creative feuilletonistics, and of how even in his motto: "I am outraged, therefore I am," he was a kin soul with Dési Huber, this pained silence, which causes the poet to carve his "Fifth Eclogue" into fragment, is all the more overpowering. "They Just Couldn't Bear It..." is, naturally, no fragment; it is, rather, a deeply-felt dirge, at the end of which the challenging voice calls to us and to the age from almost the height of Imre Madách, with the energy of his "Man: struggle" ("Ember, küzdj"):

Man: be on the lookout, observe your world;  
this is the past, this the ferocious present—  
carry them in your heart. Live the evil moment,  
and always know what you must do for it  
to make it different.

If my above arguments, either on behalf of “I Cannot Know...” or of “They Just Couldn’t Bear It...” sound convincing, so be it; conspicuously, I hope, I did on purpose discuss two poems, and I am sure it is clear that we could set up further criteria, on the basis of which we could let at least three or four additional “candidates” pass in detailed review. For this, to be brief, is not what is of the essence. What we are here aiming for is not positivistic, tangible “results,” as these are so often understood in traditional scholarship; our attitude is not that which American humour can at times so strikingly caricature: “Will the real ‘Sixth Eclogue’ please stand up?” No—anything like this is, of course, out of the question. Instead of this I would like once again to call our attention to that terrible, and terribly simple, fact which we already know, namely, that a “Sixth Eclogue”—does not exist. *Why is this the case?* This, in my opinion, is the real question.

In order to enable ourselves to discuss this question effectively, we must allow ourselves a brief excursus into the semantics of the word *why*. It is well known that in the natural sciences there is no such question as: Why? Such a question, for example: “Why does water consist of hydrogen and oxygen?” we can easily answer by saying: “Because the Lord ordained that it shall be so.” Needless to say, to provide such answers is the proper task not of physics but of theology. If, on the other hand, to the question: “Why do we have two eyes?” we reply: “So that we may see also in the third dimension,” we furnish an answer worthy of some note, yet unworthy of modern biology. In the course of the history of the biological sciences, the phenomena of evolution were often explained in such a goal-oriented, unscientific fashion. Neither question is worth taking seriously by scientists. Yet with the two above questions, about the composition of water and about optics, I touch on philosophy’s two favourite *Why?*’s, on mechanism and on teleology, on the *why*’s of cause and of purpose.<sup>14</sup> We can ask our question concerning the missing “Sixth Eclogue” thus: “What caused it not to come into being?” or thus: “What purpose did the poet think to serve by seeing to it that it not come into being?”



The circumstances that caused "Sixth Eclogue" to remain unwritten already form, naturally enough, the subject of a very considerable literature. Not that the contributions to it necessarily touch on our phantom poem. Of the fact that Radnóti most probably simply did not have time to write a "Sixth Eclogue," we can remind ourselves even without making an attempt at identification, as this is done by Trencsényi-Waldapfel. We can also look at the datings of the poems. Radnóti completed "Fifth Eclogue" on 21 November 1943; the poem which eventually received the title "Fragment" he wrote, as pointed out above, on the eve of this last report for labour duty, on 19 May 1944. Between these two dates, in the course of almost exactly six months, Radnóti writes or completes ten poems. He orders a cycle ("Slips of Paper"); he writes an important poem for a sad occasion ("They Just Couldn't Bear It..."); he finishes a poem left unfinished the year before ("Dream Landscape"; beneath it the date: 20 October 1943—16 May 1944). Ten poems as the result of six months' work may not seem like much, until we consider that about this time Radnóti was also working hard on a commissioned translation, of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Next to his always rather slow, extremely careful, method of working we may well view as somewhat inconsistent the almost Mozartean speed with which Radnóti was able to translate even the first two acts of Shakespeare's comedy. The letter in which the poet promises the translation is dated 24 January 1944, and in that letter Radnóti assures the publisher, the Franklin Society, of a May 31 deadline with the final manuscript.<sup>15</sup> We need not belabour the point that the real fragment the poet left behind is this beautiful translation. It could not, then, particularly surprise us to hear that Radnóti had neither the time left to devote, with the proper care and energy, to the composition of a "Sixth Eclogue," nor the nervous energy or attentiveness to do justice to a phase of his work which, over and above the business of datings (on which he at all times insisted), demanded of the poet the observance of a numerical order as well.

We must speak here a bit about the phenomena of forgetting, rather than entertain the possibility that in (very possibly) forgetting "Sixth Eclogue" the poet shows either relaxation of artistic discipline, or willingness to give up plans, worthily to round out and complete the oeuvre. Quite the contrary. From

István Vas, one of the late Radnóti's closest friends, we know that in those terrible days, when even the great poets were preoccupied in the main with going into hiding, and their attention was on the news over the radio, on the position of the front lines, and on the procurement of the necessities of life, Radnóti's energies remained unshakeably with his work.<sup>16</sup> It is, on the other hand, also from what István Vas has told me in personal conversation that I know how forgetful Radnóti could be in certain matters. In this forgetfulness, numbers occupied first place. He was incapable of remembering a telephone number; and, who knows, in those days perhaps it is the number 6 that could have been banished from his consciousness. That we are not, here, discussing strictly literary matters does not change the fact that our focus is a creative man, about whose mental patterns we are making informed guesses. In formulating such conjectures, it is especially on the level of perceptual psychology that biographical data can be of some service. But an account of the poet sitting at his desk and working on his poem is also a part of his biography. Here I deem it important to speculate also on how ambiguous the structure and fragmentary nature of "Fragment" is. From Mrs. Miklós Radnóti I learned that those ellipsis dots, two rows of them following stanza four and one after stanza five, present in modern editions of the poet's works, are there in the manuscript as well, and, as we also well know, the poem remained without a title. Despite this, as mentioned above, the poem itself is complete. Here we can hardly talk about phenomena of forgetting or of absent-mindedness. Is it possible that those ambiguous dots were meant to serve only as symbols of the painful silence of poets in wartime, as this is mentioned in the fifth stanza?

In the realm of concrete data we come upon yet another mechanistic explanation for the absence of a "Sixth Eclogue." And that is that, very possibly, the poet's lines were present in his mind, and that he wished to retain them in his memory until a suitable time for writing them down in a fitting manner should present itself. The fact that "surfing time" (as he formulates it in "Fourth Eclogue") did not grant him the tranquility to do this, makes it possible, even probable, that when in Lager Heidenau he was working on "Seventh Eclogue," he had still not abandoned the idea of working on and rounding out this other poem. Such a possibility naturally embraces cause and purpose both.

Although, in one sense, we cannot here speak of documentation, the situation throws light on an important corner of the poet's workshop. Radnóti scholars who have examined manuscripts by the poet could observe how rarely we are confronted with drafts gone over several times; we never come across manuscripts that present serious difficulties in decipherment (as do, e.g., the manuscripts of Georg Trakl). Nor could those perfect poems at Lager Heidenau and elsewhere around Bor have come about under those conditions, had the poet had to rely on a creative method based on extensive draftings and redraftings. Much rather, Radnóti ipso facto belongs among poets who work holistically, straight from the mind, relying on the mood, the energy, the suggestions of the auspicious moment. The work then comes into being, regardless of whether the pastoral muse must help the poet at home, in a café, or at one of the camps.<sup>17</sup>

Turning to the purely teleological side of the problem, inquiring solely about purposes that the nonexistence of "Sixth Eclogue" might be thought to serve, we leave the fields of data and documentation. It is well known to all who work on Radnóti's life and oeuvre that a great deal of material pertaining to both has not yet seen the light of day. Despite this, I dare believe that even if the day should arrive when we have access to all extant manuscripts, the chances for coming upon a written statement concerning a "Sixth Eclogue" are slim. But the fine irony of the matter is that, even if we were to make such a find — imaginably, a letter, a diary entry, the transcript of an interview — it would, in our particular instance, not necessarily be convincing, or, more important, reliable. I am not even thinking so much of Radnóti's occasional, Apollinaire-like and good-humoured, mystifying tendencies (for, faced with the seriousness of the hour, he may possibly have foregone such); rather, of the principle that in the area of interpreting and critically evaluating poetic intentions, it is not the poets who are the most highly qualified. The literary historian who provides this service must, however, concentrate solely on the mute evidence of available texts and of circumstance.

Let us set up a hypothesis, one that I have not yet encountered in the literature on Radnóti. How defensible is the assumption that the poet intentionally left out a poem entitled "Sixth Eclogue"? I do not mean to suggest either that the text was lost or that the poet first wrote the poem and then destroyed it. Rather,

I would like to weigh one of two additional possibilities. Either Radnóti left out the number itself, it being, presumably, a matter of indifference to him whether he called the next eclogue “Sixth” or “Seventh,” or he actively and consciously renounced his aspirations to writing “Sixth Eclogue,” while it remained of decisive importance for him which eclogue in the series he assigns which number. Between the two possibilities I would like to decide in favour of the latter. Anyone who has read Radnóti’s eclogues with any amount of care could not help noticing the degree of importance of the ordinals that identify the individual members of the cycle; how impossible it is to interchange “First Eclogue” with “Second,” “Third” with “Fifth,” “Fourth” with “Eighth.” Totally apart from the traditional mysticism attaching to the integers from one through nine (by courtesy of which we could also explain the rightness of the arrangement by pointing to the “perfection” of the numbers one and eight as underlying the rank and dignity of “First” and “Eighth Eclogues”), we could state that the moral *steadfastness* of tone in the eclogues stands outwardly symbolized by their *steadfastly* adhering to the numerical order that the poet, with his artistic intuitions, has assigned them. To such a view, these place values are no more interchangeable than are the acts in a play. Could it be possible that the poet, after having said all that he was given to say in the first five eclogues, as well as in their forerunners, decided that “Sixth Eclogue” can best stand its post by not putting in its physical appearance at all? According to this, the poet would have confessed faith by a gesture of conscious artistic sacrifice.

It is not, then, the “Sixth Eclogue” which remained a “fragment” but the entire series; not a single poem, but the whole oeuvre. But let us note the quotation marks placed around the word *fragment*; also what Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel says about the character, the “fragmentary” identity of “Fifth Eclogue.” It is a perfect instrument expressing the contents, an instrument serving the pain, the silence symbolized by and in the poem. In like manner, and mirroring precisely the method of “Fifth Eclogue,” the lack of “Sixth” is an instrument playing, as it were, the music of that pain, that symbolic act of growing silent, about which the poet so eloquently speaks in the closing lines of the “Fragment” of 19 May 1944. It is important for us to remember that Radnóti speaks (more properly: sings) of growing silent (as he did earlier, in “In a Restless Hour”); he himself does not

actually take that road. And he certainly does not renounce his rights and aspirations to completing his series of eclogues in a worthy manner. Yet we too seem to have some right to interpret the lack of a major eclogue as an act of personal sacrifice, given only that we are talking about the consequences of an artistic decision, rather than about a child of necessity. After all, Radnóti scholars of all time will be faced with the “fragmentary” nature of a cycle of poems which most assuredly seeks its equal in all of twentieth-century Hungarian poetry. Let this “fragmentariness” serve as a reminder that we can create fragments also by forcibly attributing a “wholeness” uncongenial to the nature of what is “fragment”; also of the truth that in the humanities it is often more important to ask the right questions than to attempt to furnish to them answers that seem possessed of finality.

#### NOTES

1. Emil Lichtenberg, *Mozart élete és művei* (Budapest: Rózsavölgyi, 1943), p.7.
2. Miklós Radnóti, *Eclogák*, ed. Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel (Budapest: Magyar Helikon, 1961), afterword.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 96-98.
4. Miklós Radnóti, *Eclogák*, ed. Pál Réz (Budapest: Magyar Helikon, Szépirodalmi, 1979), p. 29.
5. Tibor Melczer, “Radnóti Miklós utolsó költői korszaka.” Diss. Budapest (ELTE), 1974, p. 137.
6. B.S. Adams, “The Eclogues of Miklós Radnóti,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 43 (1965): 396.
7. Miklós Radnóti, *The Complete Poetry*, ed. and trans. Emery George (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1980), “Introduction,” n. 42. (p. 46). This edition is quoted throughout the paper.
8. The poem written in five-line stanzas is a favourite form with Radnóti since his first verse collection, *Pagan Salute*; cf., e.g., “Tápé, Old Evening,” “Elegy on the Death of a Hobo,” “An Eskimo Thinks of Death,” “In My Memories...,” and “Á la recherche...”
9. In addition to a number of poems in the early books referring to icons and other portrayals of Christ, there are “And Cain Talked with Abel His Brother,” (in *Pagan Salute* (1930)), the uncollected poem “Marginal Note to Luke”; furthermore, his prose works “The Revelation of St. John the Divine” and “On Dániel Berzsenyi.” (The latter essay concludes with a reference to The Book of Daniel.)
10. Some suggestions (numbers indicate eclogues; titles following them their arguable forerunners): 1. “Peace: A Hymn”; 2. “Veresmart”; 3. “You Wonder, Dear One...”; 4. “End-of-October Hexameters”; 5. “As, Imperceptibly,...”; 7. “Fragment”; 8. “Á la recherche...” Trencsényi-Waldapfel (*ibid.*, p. 80) calls attention to Radnóti’s diary entry of 19 November 1940, in which he notes the Vergilian scene, at Szamosveresmart, that underlies the imagery of “Veresmart” (the poem bears the date 10 January 1941).
11. Trencsényi-Waldapfel, *ibid.*, pp. 86-87.
12. Imre Bori writes: “On the basis of formal inspiration and correspondences in style, I would prefer to enlist, among the ranks of the eclogues, ‘Not Memory, Nor Magic’ ” *Radnóti Miklós költészete* (Novi Sad: Forum, 1965), n. 33, p. 188.
13. See also the study by Béla Pomogáts, “Rekviem és ars poetica - Radnóti Miklós: Nem bírta hát...,” *Kortárs* 23 (1979): 780-83. A series of the pictures referred to in the poem are reproduced in György Horváth, *Dési Huber István* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1976).

14. Although theology's main preserve is questions with a teleological intent, it is not by any means confined to such. The above question on the chemistry of water, followed by its proposed answer, is strictly within mechanics. Were we to pursue the inquiry and ask the next question: "Why did the Lord ordain this?" the answer would have to be teleological.

15. See Krisztina Voit, "Radnóti Miklós és a Franklin Társulat," *Irodalomtörténet* 63 (1981): 486-87.

16. "On 9 May, under the title 'Hiding Out,' he wrote a perfect little song...this, precisely, was what was so arresting: that in the poems written during these days filled with the fear of death and with humiliations, no turbulence could be felt; just this sublime tranquility lends them their peculiar beauty. I told him this, but he fended off my praise. It would be terrible, he replied, if these were his last poems—they are not great enough for that" (István Vas, "Radnóti emlékezete," in: I.V., *Az ismeretlen isten. Tanulmányok 1934-1973* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1974), p. 808).

17. With the enumeration of home, café, Lager, cf. Radnóti's own catalogue of places where he listened to his "kin poems" (rokonversek) written in foreign languages, and to their possible translations: "...this line of theirs or that one accompanied me...at home, over my desk and in company, in strange rooms, on the road, in cattle cars, over snoring comrades, in the library, at a concert, in waking and in sleep" ("On Translation") Afterword to Miklós Radnóti, *Orpheus nyomában. Műfordítások kétezer év költőiből* (Budapest: Pharos, 1943), in Pál Réz, ed., *Radnóti Miklós Művei* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1978), p. 709.

A suggestive example for the amount of time over which the conception of a poem can reside in a poet's mind, may well be "Spring Is in Flight...", the "Proem" to the eclogues. Granted that this poem, dated 11 April 1942, is the product of an occasion; its most reliable allusion to the demonstrations of 15 March of that year, to which the poem responds, may be found in the poem's mood and imagery. This, however, does not answer two, somewhat unrelated, questions: For how long did Radnóti carry within him certain lines or passages of the poem? and : since when had he considered the idea of writing a prefatory poem to the eclogues?