

## ABSTRACTS

### György Kövér: From hysteria to madness: The parallel case histories of Klára and Emma

The paper depicts the lives of daughters of the son of the Viennese wholesaler Izsák Figdor, Michael (1790–1830), who deceased at an early age. Common to their fates is that they both finished their unhappy lives in a lunatic asylum. After judicial interdiction had been placed upon her, the older of the two daughters, the spinster Klára (1823-1888) was first placed in a private institution in Vienna and later to the state asylum in Lower Austria. Thee younger daughter, the married Emma (1828–1900) had been an inhabitant of the state asylum in Lipótmező, Buda, and later on lived in the Schwartzter Sanatorium. In Klára's case we only have information about the interdiction in 1867 from the documents of the Chancery, while in Emma's case these may be supplemented by a study of the doctors' records.

The documents contain three diagnoses (hysteria; melancholia; lunacy). The paper follows the diagnosis of these illnesses within the framework of the medical discourse of the age with concrete reference to the case of Klára and Emma. During the description of the cases the following dilemmas of interpretation were encountered: is the fate of the individual whose behavior transcends the borders or 'normalcy' defined by the micro-society (the family) that regards such deviation as a medical matter or by the institutions removing the marginalized person from his/her original surroundings (the interdiction) or, rather, is it the continuously changing institutionalized system of medical discourse, which not only gives the illness a name, but also provides an opinion on the chances of the cure based on the diagnosis or decides that the case is hopeless and rules that the patient is to be institutionalized and treated? Last, but not least we have also tried to answer the question whether the use of the mental diagnosis and case history increases or decreases the possibilities of biographical work.

### Zsolt K. Horváth: Auxiliary verbs of the soul The experience and elaboration of forced labor service: Ferenc Mérei

The paper, a preliminary study to the biography to be written about the psychologist Ferenc Mérei (1909-1986) is an attempt to understand the experiences of the period of forced labor service between 1942–1944. The fundamental question is this: why does Mérei almost always speak positively about the forced labor ser-

vice? Using the so called cross treatment of sources, the documents in the archives, unpublished manuscripts, interviews, conversations about Mérei and his own scientific work two simultaneous patterns of life-conduct can be reconstructed: (1) “Nocht–Nicht–Sein”, the revolutionary teleology looking into the future, the belief that joining the Red Army is a possibility for the realization of the “communist revolution”; and (2) the pleasure principle, the a hic-et-nunc existence that regards the given life situation as empirical reality and gains consciousness of itself by making use of the minor pleasures aimed at survival. According to the paper’s conclusions it is the political creed and the genuineness of the experience of minor pleasures as well as the elaboration of traumas that resulted in successful psychic elaboration in Mérei’s case (compared to other survivors of the holocaust and forced labor service).

## Lafferton Emese: Death from hypnosis

An 1894 Case and the Mental Geography of Science – recovers the story of a curious and fatal hypnotic séance in a provincial Hungarian castle and reconstructs the waves of influence it exerted throughout Europe. The case allows Lafferton to outline a map of scientific and social exchanges in order to recover how hypnosis was embedded in intricate social relations. By sensationalising it, the media propelled the story across national and social boundaries within a few days. European psychiatric and medical mandarins and social commentators were compelled to respond, demonstrating the social ramifications of the issues related to hypnotic practice.

The study shows how the provincial hypnotic séance was connected to medical legislation in the Budapest government (which immediately passed a resolution that greatly limited the practice of hypnosis in the country), to experimental research by psychiatric and medical gurus in prestigious institutes all over Europe, to lay hypnosis as well as to the courtroom from where forensic cases invaded private homes with the help of the media.

The discussion of Hungarian and European expert opinions and the local court investigation enables Lafferton to shed new light on questions of the locality and status of medico-legal expertise, and to reconsider more general themes of centre and periphery in 19th century Europe.