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Emigration and labyrinth

**(East Central European forms of existence
and consciousness)**

It still might not have been fully realised as to what extent the life and works of Jan Amos Komenský represent the consciousness, situation evaluation, and fate of the region called East Central Europe, Central Europe (in a certain historical period, with good reason: 'in-between' Europe). Not only the fact is expressive that he carried out a significant proportion of his activity in three 'central' countries in the East Central European and Central European area, that is, in Bohemia, Hungary, and Poland, but also that his *influence-history* is a decisive part of the cultural history of the region. In fact, primarily not because he only experienced being an emigrant in his life and as it is revealed in his works, but he turned this to be an organic part of his work and influence-history as well. Secondly, because he could see the labyrinth-like character of the region in a way, which is valid even today. He expressed the essence of this labyrinth in his Baroque novel, entitled *Labyrint světa a Ráj srdce* (Labyrinth of World and Paradise of Heart). The powers managing the fate of Europe forgot about the region which, in the course of its history, existed as an involuntary part of multiethnic empires—as Komenský found this out painfully upon hearing about the peace treaty ending the Thirty Years War—or if the opposite happened, they sought to establish a new order and sowed the seeds of new disputes and conflicts; thinking in sectors of influence, they cared much neither about the interests of the peoples and nations of Central Europe nor about the suitable methods of their integration into Europe. Not even his European fame could save Komenský from experiencing—as if sharing the allegoric fate of the allegoric wanderer of his Baroque novel—what the centuries to come would verify: the exoduses (first of all political but also economic ones after the end of the 19th century) become organic, unavoidable parts of national history. Moreover, although 'experiencing' life as a labyrinth becomes thematic primarily in literature, this literature has an outstanding value in the sense that at the same time it personifies the 20th century impersonalisation of alienated personalities who (not the least) are constrained to endure an emigrant existence. The influence-history can be considered significant not merely in Czech and Slovak literature; the first German translation of his novel was prepared in 1783 and the Hungarian one in 1805. Its translator, István Rimány was active as a Calvinist pastor in Bohemia in a less severe atmosphere following the edict of tolerance of Joseph II. His work is of interest for researchers both of Czech and Hungarian cultural history. In the middle of the 18th century, an author working in Gömör County, Mátyás Bodó wrote a work entitled *Poutník* (Wanderer). Much later in time, Oskar Kokoschka, painter-writer of Austro-German expressionism (emigrant in Prague between 1934–1938) incorporated the figure of Komenský into a drama during his exile in England. One of the first formulators of the Central Europe discourse,

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Milan Kundera elaborates (not merely on the interpretation of emigrant fate, but also) in part on Central European specificities and in part on the parallels accounting for their regional existence (in literature and music) on several occasions. In his *The Art of the Novel* (*L'art du roman*), he draws attention to connections between Kafka, Hašek, Musil, Broch, and Gombrowicz (that is German-Jew, Czech, Austrian, Polish authors) with their distinctive features of Central Europeanism. In his entry compilation, he imagines to discover the manifestation of *modern* in a labyrinth, in which one can get lost. It would call for a more ample analysis to see what role the interpretation of the novels of Kafka plays here; so much we can say that the world of the novels of Kafka infers a labyrinth with a centre that can never be reached, since it is unsure even whether or not this centre exists at all. Kundera cites Czech–Austrian–Hungarian musical parallels and congruence (Janáček–Bartók–Berg) in his other volume of essays *Les testaments trahis* (Testaments Betrayed) and he dedicates a separate chapter to the *arithmetic* (chronology) of the emigrant. He concludes that ‘for a novelist or a composer, leaving the place to which his imagination, his obsessions, and thus his fundamental themes are bound could make for a kind of ripping apart’. Research has revealed that diary, memoirs, autobiographies, the evocation of childhood, and nostalgia—quoting Komenský—into the Paradise of heart become much liked genres of emigrant writers. We can find examples abundantly. The Serb author, David Albahari, who preserves also the Sephardic Jew traditions (of the Balkans), blends the text of his mother recorded with a tape recorder into the narration of his novel *Mamac* (Bait). Earlier, Miloš Crnjanski pasted the last days of an emigrant Russian officer into his work entitled *Roman o Londonu* (Novel of London). The also emigrant Sándor Márai chooses the Central European emigrant behaviour—incomprehensible for Westerners—to be the theme of his novel *San Gennaro vére* (The Wonder of San Gennaro) revealing that orthography and the forms of names have a symbolic and identity-containing essence. At the same time, he shows that Westerners might see the labyrinth, the unrecognisability and impenetrability of emigrant existence in this East Central European and Central European writing. The transcription of name forms is a deprivation of one’s autonomous personality, since accents and diacritical marks prove uniqueness and independent existence in a visible manner.

‘These people who nowadays come from behind the Iron Curtain, all insist on accents. They start shouting in Bagnoli, in the offices where the documents are issued, for the return of the accent. Accent is important in these countries, so it appears. They have all kinds of marks and accents on their names, in their documents, on their vowels, and there are accents even on their consonants. Or a mark sort of like an accent. Hungarians, Czechs, and the Polish have separate diacritical signs. They cling to them. (...) It looks as though they had nothing any more and one day they recognised that they were not exactly the same in the world without the accent what they used to be when they still had possessed their accent. (...)

It is possible. (...) Accent denotes our personality.’

We can switch back to Franz Kafka, and primarily to his novel *The Castle* at this point. We would like to point out that part of the researchers assumed a direct connection between the Fortuna castle of the Komenský work and the castle of Kafka’s village. I

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would like to add to this that we could even discover an economic emigrant in the main character of the novel, K., the geometer. This 'wanderer' is rambling about in the labyrinth of bureaucracy, which replaced theocracy both figuratively and literally (as he loses his way in the 'labyrinth' of the inn as well; he does not get to the functionary who called for him). At the same time, he remains a stranger in his chosen home all along, he cannot reach his objective: integration; perhaps he will be employed only in the moment of his death (the novel was left unfinished, this is revealed by a draft).

A thick anthology can be compiled entitled 'the literature of exile' from among the literary works of our region (maybe also the aforementioned examples proved this) and to such an extent that e.g. the Hungarian, but also the Czech and the Polish as well have a separate 'entries' in the national literary histories. This must have had various reasons and consequences. It is scarcely necessary to elaborate in length on the evident political-censorial causes, or at most in so far as they influence the literary-aesthetic reasons taken in a stricter sense. Although the Czech–Hungarian–Polish 'literary' exile came about because of 'political transformations', we can connect to that also the difference apparent in the views concerning the function and existence of literature. In brief: dictatorships and occupying forces are not very fond of experimenting and the so-called 'uncommitted' artists or those, who side with *others*. For this reason, we can detect considerable differences in the structure and hierarchy of domestic and emigrant artistic 'canons'. The literature of exile had only marginal significance in the literature interpretation of the one-time authorities if the official critiques happened not to keep silent about it at all. At the same time, not only the freedom of experimentation is granted to the authors of emigration, but also the possibility of throwing light upon their situation nakedly and build upon labyrinth-existence of the 20th century joined together with emigrant existence. In part, the same can be said about Spanish émigré literature (very significant in the 20th century), and to a great extent also about the German–Austrians—only that in their case, emigration into the language might be a less important question. Namely, loosing the readers of Spain did not mean that the Latin Americans were lost too, while the German-Austrians had opportunities of publication in Switzerland and even more at other places. It is rather typical that it is Joseph Roth to contemplate on the linguistic consciousness of the émigré author, who brought with the memory of the disappeared (common) home from Galicia to Vienna. And similarly, Elias Canetti whose vanished Eden is his childhood in Rustschuk, a multilingual community, in which the language of the closer family and 'language' of the wider environment proved to be complementing each other. Sándor Márai made it understood still back in Hungary that mother tongue was the real home. The language loss of emigration might change over into something damaging for one's life, because those forced into exile will not be able to talk authentically which would be an indispensable precondition of understanding and making one understood (also Heidegger and Ortega y Gasset refer to this). According to the dialogue of the novel of Márai: 'These people are constantly preparing for the world. As to a language lesson, they prepare for the world so. When they do not have their accent any more, they do not have their mother tongue and because of this they talk and read confusedly in any kinds of languages'.

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Stefan Zweig and Musil experienced exile as a loss and so did Richard Wagner writer-journalist, who moved from Bánát (Romania) into the Federal Republic of Germany. Stefan Zweig recalled the world of yesterday in his memoirs, the period of order and middle-class peace. He concluded its permanent termination, as not only the closer home was gone, but also the Europe-home was ruptured as well (Márai reaches this conclusion in his travelogue entitled *Európa elrablása* (The Ravishing of Europe) and published in 1947). Musil, starting from his reflections upon émigré genres, thinks about how the documentary-like could be bent over into the sphere of aesthetics and how isolation and the losing of roots could be compensated. R. Wagner talks about a dual loss in a statement of his in 1994. First, he emphasises that diversity and the co-existence of many peoples was the essence and cultural principle of East Central Europe, from which the values of this region sprang forth. Thus, East Central Europe suffered an unfathomable damage with the forced emigrations and transfers (let us add: it was far from voluntary population exchange). Second, also the affected personality is an injured party of this artificial intervention in the life of the peoples. Wagner calls to mind the loss of identity: both in case of the individual and the minority represented by the individual. In a few generations, nobody (and nothing) will remind us of diversity, cultural values, and dialectal variety and richness. The emigrant/transferred persons preserve their past but their grandchildren neither speak their tongue nor understand their memories. When R. Wagner was asked what he reads with pleasure, he spoke of his Austrian, Serb, Polish, Czech, and Hungarian readings. Of those authors, who cast the Central European idea in the form of a novel: Joseph Roth, Danilo Kiš, Andrzej Kuśniewicz, Milan Kundera, and György Dalos. This list is naturally mixed; their conception of Central Europe, what is more, of the labyrinth, differs greatly. However, it is common in them that they take the Central European character—as plurality—as cultural texts interpreting each other. Joseph Roth problematised the disintegration of a world that lost its centre in the dissolution of the Monarchy. Kuśniewicz did not want to revive the Monarchy-tongue, which had become a dead language—he only wanted to point out what values vanished practically into nothing. Danilo Kiš marked the intertwining of languages as the primary condition of the narrability of the story. The hero of not one of his works is the figure becoming lost in the historic labyrinth of East Central Europe. It is as if Milan Kundera had found the way out from the labyrinth, changed language, and became a successful French writer. However, his two works we mentioned suggest that he cannot and does not want to lose touch with his cultural roots (maybe this is why the work of Janáček and Bartók is on his mind so much and he turns back to Kafka so often). And to illustrate that the mentioned Hašek-Kafka parallel cannot be originated from the Czech literary and mental historical view only, we quote a remark of the one-time university student in Prague, newspaper editor, and memoirs writer, Willy Haas: 'Švejk, the soldier is a completely unfathomable individual: nobody knows, nobody can know as to what extent he fakes stupidity or he is stupid indeed. This is some floating, like life itself, mystery, like the 'sin' in *The Trial* (Der Prozess) of Franz Kafka'. Let us make a detour and cite the Monarchy-perception of Haas, in which (naturally, not for the first time in his case) emerges the person of Francis Joseph as a symbolic figure, as the personification of the

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world of yesterday: Francis Joseph 'held the Monarchy together as long as he lived, for he himself was the Monarchy. We mourned not only for his figure, but also for the relative liberty of thinking and research in the Austria of the turn of the century'.

East Central European and Central European history built its own labyrinths much earlier. Komenský merely gave a name to the path the Czech literate of the 17th century (together with so many exiles) was forced to take. Two outstanding personalities of Hungarian literature of the 18th century were constrained to pursue their literary activity in their life in exile: Ferenc Rákóczi II and Kelemen Mikes, author of the *Törökországi levelek* (Letters from Turkey). After the end of the 18th century, the literates of Poland emigrated in several waves after defeated uprisings, which were accompanied by the compassion of European public opinion. The revolutionary events in 1848/49 signalled the rearrangement of the life and literature of the countries with a new wave of emigrant-refugee crowd. The world wars, peace treaties, victorious and defeated revolutions of the 20th century drove out into the world—among others—a great proportion of artists and thinkers. Due to this, polycentric national cultures were born with the centres divided from each other by politics in a way that dialogue was almost impossible among them. It became apparent when the walls crumbled: émigré literature rendered national literature more modern and differentiated in the majority of the cases; it held a lively dialogue in part with segments from the past of the silenced national culture and also with modern literary thinking. The dramaturgy of Polish romanticism, for example two works so important as *Kordian* (1834) of Juliusz Słowacki and *Nie-Boska Komedjá* (1835: Non-divine Comedy) of Zygmunt Krasiński could not hope for a performance of stage to be occurring soon. The hopeless situation liberated the authors; they did not have to care about the ideological and artistic 'expectations' of the audience; they could make themselves independent of the techniques of the stage which were rather rudimentary back then. Moreover, they could give rise to a formation of plays (in case of Krasiński of dramatic poetry) which did not fit into the domestic canon: they rewrote it with an eye to European (literary) experiences. Another example: when the literature and art of avant-garde and neo-avant-garde basically could not appear in Hungary in public, Hungarian émigré authors who were engaged in a dialogue with European neo-avant-garde endeavours, continued to think over the Hungarian neo-avant-garde tradition and they practically expanded the Hungarian literary system.

The establishment of émigré literary-cultural centres is a consequence of historical tragedies. At the same time, the polycentric literary system made it possible that literature written in the mother tongue did not suffer a rupture despite the tight limitations and to the closure and defencelessness (from a political and power aspect) of domestic literature. In this sense, the cultural efforts of emigration could even be called 'missionary'. On the one hand, there is the object: the representation of continuity. However, on the other hand there is the factor of the new situation, the interruption of the life of the individual (not only the author). World seems/seemed to be like a labyrinth maybe because of this. At least, the writer could feel it with good reason that he arrived to a crossroads which could decide his fate and where he is (might be) forced to be solving crossword puzzles. He could rethink the varieties of alienation many times, partly as a personality, who drew far from

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his linguistic-cultural background, and partly as a personality, who is an eyewitness of the stiffening of culture into civilization. Although his lifestyle-change coincides with a transfer into a 'more developed' world, asynchrony still remains, since on the one hand he arrived among the new forms from the outside and on the other, other linguistic cultures laid the foundations of his identity. The *Diary* of Gombrowicz reveals this at times hidden, at other times suddenly unfolding crises of identity, the freedom which becomes articulate in the 'belonging-to-nowhere' of the personality. So does the émigré oeuvre of Sándor Márai, the sequel of his autobiography written in 1949 (*Föld, föld!...*[Land, Land!: A Memoir]), and his *Diaries* he continued until the end of his life. We quote from his work *San Gennaro vére* again; once more from the account of an Italian character who pushes forward into the psychology of the emigrant making investigations on a stranger (emigrant) who presumably committed suicide. In the course of this, it is with astonishing empathy that he reconstructs the situation consciousness of the exile drifting between the growing distance of the homeland and the nostalgia for it:

'Those strangers who do not have a home any more live really only those moments with the old tension of their life: the moments when they are waiting for the morning mail. Then, they always cherish hopes. They already know that they have no home—one can lose a home only absolutely and definitively and the historical turning points grant most often only an opportunity for haphazard and hasty returns but do not provide a home again—and they are still expecting the mail. They know that home was not merely a geographical apparition on a map but, similarly to love, a province of experiences. Who once has left this province, returns to what and whom he liked in vain: he finds neither a home nor his beloved but a country or a woman who has gained weight or married someone else. The strangers know this. And still, they are awaiting the mail'.

Sándor Márai hides the experiences of his first years in emigration in the plot of the novel. It is such an autothematizing work that shuts off individuality (the person rendered objective is retained) with its fictitious character. He works out a formation experimentally which helps rendering the lifestyle-change of the emigrant perceptible with the change of the form of the novel. The well-perceivable elevation of personal motifs of the diary notes of 1945–1957 and the verifiable events up to a level of existential philosophy as well as the several narrators inserted between the author and the reader, make the 'one-time' event and the case study distant and render it possible that the fate of the exile be dimensioned as a general situation in life. The interpretation of the émigré tripartite book of Josef Škvorecký (which has become a four-part volume with the novel published still back at home in Czechoslovakia) also offers the opportunities of autobiographic reading or its reading as a roman à clef. The critiques believed they recognized the author in the main character. In reality, it is personal Czech history that is revealed, contemporary and recollected happenings alternate and as the writer utilizes the technique of register shift and mixing, he expands time and geographic space. He abandons and makes us abandon the linearity of autobiography with this as he elaborates on the experiences of emigration (as ripened existential philosophy) behind the mask of an entertaining novel.

After numerous examples, it is time to return to the theses constituting the basis of the study and according to which, emigration and the realisation that the world is a labyrinth

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are essential 'experiences' in the East Central European (and in part Central European) literary situation. What is more: the two theses are closely connected to each other; there is a correlation between them. We can instantly raise two questions: 1. Is it only in this region where we can find the above outlined characteristics or we can see these kinds of correlations maybe in other cultures (for example in the mentioned Spanish one) as well? 2. In what way the transfer from one type of variety into another in the oeuvre of a writer can be interpreted or explained; what linguistic consequences this has (if it has any at all); can it possibly yield literary fruits that the domestic dual culture is substituted with the forced bi- or multilingualism and multiculturalism of emigration?

It is much easier to answer the first question. Although the Spanish (literary) exile of the 19th and 20th centuries, let's say, from the romantic Espronceda to Unamuno, also experienced the antinomies of emigrant existence and encountered contemporary trends from French romanticism to French literature in the 20th century, it did not abandon the sphere of Spanish tradition: this is proved by the sovereign Byron reception of Espronceda just as by the activity of Unamuno which re- and transformed the Don Quixote conception. The literary emigration of East Central Europe—whether it brought it to consciousness or not—arrived from the region of diversity and multiculturalism. It transferred from a 'traditional' national-ethnic division (we would like to recall the quoted sentences of Márai on the 'national' peculiarities of accents and diacritical marks) into other types of dichotomies; from the language of a so-called 'small' people into the environment of 'universal language'. This proves without doubt that the East Central European author is the unique representative of exile as an emigrant: this region's effective representative. It seems more difficult to answer the second question, for the majority of emigrant writers arrived abroad as mature authors (even if they were young) and thus, they present the linguistic division of the new environment in their works at most (like Škvorecký who made use of the linguistic possibilities offered by the mingling of Canadian English and Czech in his work we mentioned). In the period of the so-called 'national awakening', the grammatically incorrect usage of mother tongue and the mixing of non-mother-tongue words and expressions into the speech served for producing a comic effect. However, the émigré author faces the fact of language loss and its deterioration and leaves the (mostly romantic) heritage developed in the era of national awakening. It is another question that for example Mickiewicz had to cope with more 'bilingualisms' during his life. His forced sojourn in Russia made him familiar with the oeuvre of Pushkin among others (like the exotic character of the 'South'). He visited Goethe during his exile in Germany and introduced Slav literatures to his students as a lecturer of the Collège de France in Paris. The Hungarian romantic novelist, Miklós Jósika served in the imperial army as a young man, lived in Transylvania as a landlord and then as an exile in Brussels. His path of life of many turning points can be perceived from the topics of his novels and memoir. He had a chance to become a German (Austrian) dramatist. He showed his first tries on that field to Raimund and he decided to give up his experimentation only after the Austrian writer had talked him out of writing dramas (in German?). We can find also novels with Romanian and Saxon topics among his works. His influence-history can be felt among the varieties of Transylvanian Saxon his-

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torical novel and his writings appear in the contemporary German language press of Transylvania. However, his literary career remains within the sphere of interest of the first period of Hungarian romantic novel writing (Walter Scott, Eugène Sue) even if he reacts cursorily to the works of Balzac. As a person committed to the Hungarian national movement, he made good use of his linguistic knowledge in his private life (as a Hungarian nobleman) just to be forced then to active bilingualism in the exile in Brussels where he lived without searching for and finding connections with the recent trends of literature written in German or French. In general, the same can be said about the Hungarian authors, who emigrated because of the events of 1848/49. They remained inside Hungarian domestic development of culture and literature although they were constrained to speak, write, and publish in a language other than their mother tongue. The literary accomplishments of Ferenc Pulszky (for example his novel written in English on Hungarian Jacobins) belong to Hungarian literature not only because they appeared in Hungarian later on, but because he spoke in them in the foreign tongue to presumed (or hoped) Hungarian readers. Even though the English language speeches of Lajos Kosuth targeted an English speaking (English and American) audience, they were drafted according to the heritage of Hungarian rhetoric and not on the basis of the practices of English orations. Only those authors become part of the receiving literature (and not all of these either) who change not merely the language but also their way of thinking and 'way of speaking'. Although Cioran laments about his longing for Hermannstadt (Nagyszében, Sibiu) in one of his letters, he is an integral part of modern French history of thought with his 'philosophy'. Similarly, the 'absurd' of Ionesco have found its place in the system of French theatre and not in referring back to the Romanian beginnings. At the same time, the 'French character' of Milan Kundera is strongly questioned first by his correlation of claiming back a stolen Central Europe and 'reconstructing' its cultural entity with a literary activity and second, by his rather distant situation from the 'mainstream' contemporary French literature. We could say with a hint of exaggeration: Kundera is writing Czech novels in French and maybe the results of his Hungarian reception can be found more or less in this fact. The independence of Kundera (just as of Sándor Márai, who rethought his writer's attitude in his émigré existence) is taking form in the sphere of attraction of the knowledge of *intercultural character*, although he is discussing Gombrowicz, it is as if we were reading an analysis referring to himself (modifying what can be modified): 'He emigrates from his home at the age of 35, in 1939. He takes only one book with as his artistic identity card, *Ferdydurké*, which is a brilliant novel but not very known in Poland and not known at all elsewhere. He disembarks far from Europe. He is inconceivably lonely. The great Argentine writers never accept him. The anti-communist Polish emigration is not interested in his art...' 'He delineates his situation with the three keywords of refusal: the refusal of submitting to the political commitment of Polish emigration (not because he sympathises with the communists but because he dreads the principle of committed literature); the refusal of Polish tradition (according to his opinion, only that person can do something effective for Poland, who turns against the "Polish character", who shakes off its oppressing romantic legacy); at last, the refusal of Western modernism of the 60s; this sterile modernism which is "dis-

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loyal to reality”, which cannot achieve anything in the art of the novel, which is academic, snobbish, and amounts to nothing more than its self-theorisation (not that Gombrowicz was less modern but his modernity is different)’. This can be considered a self-analysis of Kundera in so far as he rewrites (Czech) tradition for himself and at least to the same extent he rethinks the émigré anti-communist ‘commitment’ too. Moreover, it can hardly be classified as neo-avant-garde, follower of the new novel, etc. The characterisation of Kundera could be applied even more to the émigré activity of Sándor Márai (independent of how much we can find the possibility of a continuing interpretation in the evaluation of Gombrowicz and the self-assessment of Kundera and Márai). Márai might have imagined the intellectual union of the emigration in the first two years of his exile as a chance for common action. Later, he distanced himself from any kind of action, keeping an even distance between the political and literary/artistic groups and institutions. Although his anti-communism proved to be unshakable, he did not join the service of the current political interests and he worked merely as a chronicler of the tragic happenings of the 20th century in his appearances in Radio Free Europe in 1956–1957. He turned against the avant-garde of his own youth not to talk about the contemporary neo-avant-garde endeavours, which were meaningless to him; his opinion was devastating even on the neo-avant-garde authors of Hungarian emigration. This *interculturalism* is the realisation of a late phase of modernism in the *form of the novel* which, on the one hand becomes articulate in the sovereign tradition-assessment of mother tongue and world literature and on the other, in the realisation of the innovation of the genre (Kundera explains his ideas on the art of the novel in interviews too; Gombrowicz and Márai are able to initiate the personal character and ‘privatisation’ of the diaries to become signs of situation-awareness). Naturally, an endeavour emerges besides this, which is usually remembered as ‘backward-looking utopia’ (rückwärtsgewandte Utopie): the vanished Eden is showed through the symbol-like evocation of a virtual Central European world. The ideal citizens of Kassa and Kolozsvár mean this to Sándor Márai and the aforementioned city to Cioran. The quote is from a letter of his he sent to Wolf von Aichelburg on April 1, 1971:

‘Ich habe Heimweh nach der Provinz, und Hermannstadt enthält all dies. Wie verführerisch schön muss es vor dem Krieg 1914 gewesen sein! Das sind vielleicht Übertreibungen eines Verwöhnten. Aber in einer Metropole, wo man Mitgegenwart von Millionen Menschen ertragen muss, erhält alle provinzielle Nichtigkeit den Glanz des Paradieses.’

(‘I am homesick for the province, the ‘country’, and Nagyszeben grants me all this. How temptingly beautiful it had to be before the war of 1914! This might be the exaggeration of a conceited person. But in a metropolis, where one has to put up with the presence of millions of people, every provincial–rural–little nothing possesses the splendour of Paradise.’)

What makes me return to the Baroque novel of Komenský is not only the fact that the path of life, which is full of dangers, appears as a theme in the works of emigrant writers but also that it has a labyrinth-like character (which is not a view established only posteriorly). Although relatively few authors call this labyrinth by its name as a ‘locus ter-

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ribilis' modified by the 20th century, in reality it is post-modern (theory of) literature to describe its characteristics accurately. As opposed to the labyrinth of ancient times which had a centre and it was possible to know about this centre what traps it set for anybody who entered, here, the wanderer of the world is roaming in complete uncertainty and indefinability. Not only the 'centre' of his life ceased to exist but also the hope that he might be able to reach that centre after all. Exile—in this view—is still a labyrinth, an unceasing roaming even if everyday life makes settlement possible. It is existence between two worlds: one is the abandoned home and the return into which becomes more and more impossible (a novel character drops a remark to another Márai character who wants to return home: 'you will get to know that there are two seasons, two homes, and two worlds, and you have to keep wandering forever. (...) Sometimes I believe you have not unpacked these suitcases completely for ten years. You have always awaited something. But you will not unpack completely at home either. You will never again unpack completely. '); the other one is the new 'home', from which they long to transfer back into the real one. We quote Márai again, this time an article of his from 1933:

'The emigrants of time do not belong to a people's community, and the terror, from which they escaped, is not local (...) They flee without moving and withdrew into more profound layers of time which cannot be measured with clocks and epochs... (...) The emigrants of time do not await anything. The home they long for sinks in time'.

When they already hide in the non-existent, unmistakable past, it might appear: the path taken backward in thought is a strayed path, a deviation from the road, a non-path, or a path going in circles. The *Castle* of Kafka rises at this point, which is not a castle; it is inaccessible for rational thinking. It is an image of longing (according to certain views), the realisation of which is constantly suspended and becomes illusory, since the act of granting it a meaning, that is, its naming is postponed. And it is exactly because of this that it can fulfil the function of the prison and the labyrinth more expressively than any other prison structure. Nothing has a real meaning in the novel of Kafka, as everything has several, among them contradictory and excluding meanings without the possibility of proving or at least accepting the 'truth' of any of them. It is in the tangle of these meanings that K., the geometer (sure, it is not even certain that he is really a geometer), who wants to emigrate from his home, immigrate in the village, and settle there, that he tries to define the world, his world, and his surroundings. This compulsion for definitions makes it impossible for him to assign meanings from the beginning. Throwing a light over to his situation and status and the explanatory confrontation of his identifications and recognitions with 'reality'—which reveals constantly new forms—are equally hopeless. Thus, the castle is unapproachable, its description only adds to confusion; and what K. hears about the interior of the castle can arouse the idea of a labyrinth with good reason: 'He enters offices (i.e. Barnabas), but those are only a portion of the total, then there are barriers and behind them still more offices. (...) You shouldn't imagine these barriers as a fixed boundary. (...) There are also barriers in the offices that he enters, those are the barriers he crosses and yet they look no different from the ones he has not yet crossed, so one shouldn't assume from the outset that the offices behind those other

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barriers differ significantly from the ones Barnabas has already been in. It is only during those bleak hours that one thinks so. And then one's doubts increase, one is defenseless against them'. We would like to point out once more that Kafka was the key character of Central European context depicted by Kundera. By the way, Sándor Márai was the first Hungarian translator of Kafka. Moreover, the works of Kafka and their interpretations became almost the shaping factors of Czech history and history of thought after the scientific conference organized in Liblice.

One of the most important 'workers' of Monarchy-text, the Polish Bruno Schulz continued to weave the homespun of East Central Europe not only as the translator of Kafka but he also added significant threads to make it more colourful. In his stories—and more than once—writing, or even: Writing itself becomes a labyrinth; interpretation can promise merely a chance for understanding and by no means its certainty. Transformation is an essential element of this world, which is a change in the form from one aspect while a mistake from another, or maybe the shift of the way of looking at things. The influence-history of the Komenský text can turn into (a) new direction(s) through the mediation of Kafka: partly it returns into Czech literature and partly (given that emigration and labyrinth can stand for each other) it functions as an important part of the dictionary of Monarchy-koine.

Central European discourse (just as East Central European which is perceived as a text-universe of the subregion) marked those determining segments, which are indispensable for its interpretation, while avoided the dangers of giving and attributing meanings self-confidently. We are talking about an open formation, a series of attempts of definition, which have a share in the disclosure of the interaction between text and sphere of the text. The conjuncture of literary work and its (linguistic, cultural history, etc.) context is also a necessary factor and it is thus that personal history can become (as in case of Komenský but also in others) the recollection of culture, literature, and texts (sometimes, genres). One of the great realisations of the oeuvre of Kafka is the continuous postponement of meanings, that is, the obliteration of fixed meanings. At the same time, we can discover the oeuvre of Komenský in the context of the oeuvre of Kafka and we can bring examples of considerable power from almost any of the literatures of the region for its influence-history. And not in a paradox way at all: as if realisations overarching Komenský, Kafka, Bruno Schulz, Sándor Márai, and Milan Kundera made up the Central Europe discourse, the advocates of which mark those prerequisites, which cannot be neglected.

Then, it seems as if the attributives subtracted from the study of writers and poets and classified as common, had repercussions on the research of the regional characteristics of the notable authors. Literates have outlined the contemporary content and forms of thinking of Central Europe; it became a cultural community, if you like, a common text, owing to them. And in a way that the conjuncture of texts does not cover the single authors, who, in turn, gain 'additional meaning' with their participation in the combination. It is in this way that emigration can be an (East) Central European form of life, which produces genres relating to each other; and the labyrinth a 'symbol', due to which in part a motif-series of world literature is continued to be written and in part, a kind of

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tangle of meanings can be displayed which is émigré and belongs to the 20th century (but inherited from the Baroque and mannerism) at the same time. It is a symbol, which renders expressive and interpretable the varieties of the disruption of existence with its biographic connections. The Central European region is the subject of a continuous debate and who would like to find his way is straying in the diversity of definitions. Maybe exactly because also Central European koine is made up of many kinds of ways of speaking, from 'sociolects' as if to indicate how the perplexing variety can be turned into an 'advantage' of culture. If breaking away from or leaving the literary system of the mother tongue leads on the one hand to the loss of language, on the other it leads to raising the value of the language (sacralisation of the language) and to an evolving independence from linguistic regulations. The same happens when the personality wandering in the labyrinth lacking a centre understands the absurdity of his own existence and because of this, he can become an actor of contemporary history.

It is more and more typical that the words of those writers can count upon interest in today's world literature, who build upon the experiences of the encounters of cultures, traditions of differing tongue, and text compilations. The majority of émigré writers of our region realised that this experience has become universal and that the presentation of the personal and the world-like together has gained a significance in a process, in which *own* and *alien* can be drawn near due to mutual understanding. The Czech translation and publication in Prague of the history of Bohemia written by Sudeten German historians is one of the expressive case studies, the self-understanding strategy of diaries written in exile is another; we can follow the evolution of 'speech situations' aiming at dialogue situation and reacting upon each other in both cases. The literatures of the Central European region are polycentric, as we have touched upon this before. That is, they have several centres, even up to the present day, although the reasons have ceased after the (political) transformations, which brought about the forced emigration. At the same time, writing the labyrinth-existence into novels has not lost its timeliness and the process of Komenský- and Kafka-reception has not subsided either. Neither in our region nor in the world as a whole.

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Appendix

1. The region-subregion is mentioned here as Central Europe and there as East Central Europe in the study. The reason of this is on the one hand that the German-tongue literature of Prague and the Austrian literature were included in the elaboration. On the other hand, Serb writers are mentioned, who worked as emigrants at the borders of the heritage of the Balkans and the ‘Western’ tradition, in other words: they turned ‘Yugoslavian’ or Serb linguistic-cultural memory into literature together with mastering the Western and Central European literary/cultural aspect.
2. The status and categorisation of Milan Kundera as a Czech or French writer is subject to debates. Linguistically, he replaced Czech with French; we can find novels of his translated into Czech by somebody else and not him. At the same time, language

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change does not necessary involve a complete estrangement from the cultural community. Presumably, we will need further interpretations before taking up a more resolute position. It will be French and Czech literature and critiques of the future to accept or not to accept as their own the works written in French of the oeuvre of Kundera.