

Hungarian Sadness Project

A seven month project based on the hungarian way of life. Starting from my experience of this sad/dark/mysterious surrounding, I attempt to translate the estrangement and the difficulty of (mis)communication.

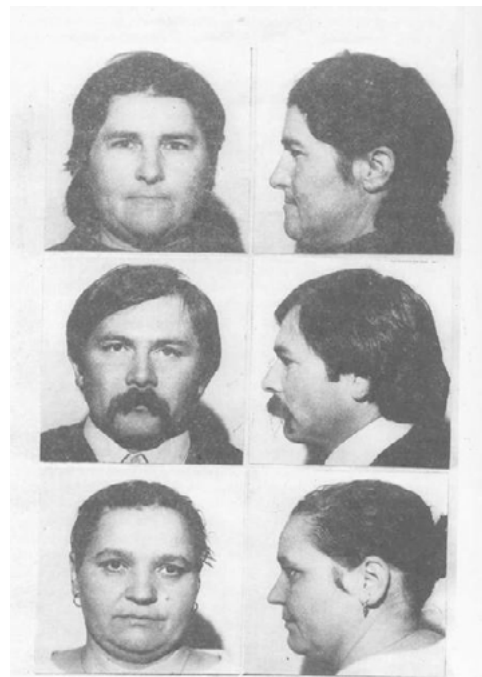
Hungarian Sadness has here become a collision of photographs and text, varying from poetic prose to semi-sociological descriptions.

After 40 Days

After forty days it is the memories of home and the contact with those who evoke these thoughts, that recall the fact that this life in sopron is not as usual as it starts to be for me. the reaction of my sister to vague building-plans and my mother's ideas about my payment, to give an example. Reminders to my geographical situation, from where I am located, I feel when national pride (literally) or a different approach to nudeness show their heads. When hungarians start talking to me, as this can occur (without any specific reason) in the waiting room of the hospital or at the local flea-market on sunday morning, they don't understand me when I say "english" in their language. Motions of emphasized body-language (from which even pointing) can here be more confusing than refreshing. It leaves them with the same feeling as the one an english-speaking foreigner gets here, when he notices "hello" can also mean "goodbye". Some of their habits are very easy to adapt to and even to embrace. Putting a container loaded with wonderful old things in front of our home, or sweet baking-habits are two of them.

1. 1 Fact and fraction

But, seriously now, sometimes it is like the fact that this country has the highest suicide rate of europe, is hanging in the air, clinging in my clothes, pulling the corners of my mouth. Without any identified reason (aside from the fact that i moved here and barely have any friends or anyone to talk to), the end of life seems to sit around as an option. Maybe it is the cold and bright dawns in the strangely empty streets, the misty thursdays that prohibit the view of the other side of the square, the birds that unlike the locals move in clusters. Some say the typical hungarian sadness, would be a direct consequence of the national anthem. As the stories of the hungarian history are filled with tragedy and sorrow, and from very early age the national feel is fed by daily repetition of the song representing the country, the personification with the cruelty, the past and the tragedy may not seem too absurd. The past is filled with corruption, collapse and conquerors. Today 40 out of 100 people have no job, and so, yet another reason to be sad. Those who do work, have grey eyes by the fatigue of working for 12 or 14 hours in a row, and have teeth that never see the sunlight as these hard workers get paid €1,20 an hour. There is no such thing as sundays or holidays for them, or a life. So the combination of the sad past and the sad present, make not every day to be like a gift here. It is also very important to note that the present is being compared to a past, closer than conquer and battle; communism. Today's misery is in the now faded light of equality, — wwthe work for all, the



not-existing money-problems, the organized social activity and the easiness of choosing your clothes in the morning,— true misery. Hungarians suffer from depression *en masse*. Both the country as the individual cope with a financial sunken position as all the system gave the population, now needs to be payed back to the ones who loaned the money to the communistic leaders, here we are talking about 25 percent tax-rates and minimum wages of 320 euro for a full-time job. The shops to be found growing like mushrooms (gomba!) are big firms like spar, lidl or tesco, who do not really adjust the prices to the rudely thin payments. Houses are small and expensive. Smile!



1.2 Friction

Ofcourse the feeling of misery is not only brown, muddy and tearful. One can also find a certain delight in the absence of expressed joy. A mysterious content, an almost mellow melancholy, a comforting state can be found in periods of gloom. About the link between europeans highest average IQ and the daily two or three hungarians who intentionally kill themselves, I am not ready to express anything other than facts, and my stupefaction.

1.3 Putting it in perspective



As I ask my hungarian companion about the words written above, he tells me his fellow-citizens would not describe themselves as sad, but as people with problems. Later he mentions that there are no clichés, no schemes. That people are people, the only thing that makes them different from one another, is their childhood. While with this, he tried to take me off of my analyzations, which can not live without generalization. But by stating all humans are by nature all very very similar, that it is only experiences that make a difference, I recall the direct link of surrounding, education and so culture to enhance that people in unlike location, are not the same. Nature- human, childhood – influence, culture – Differences. So I can I note generalizable things. I'm wandering off.

He describes them as people who behave, not people who act. A specific frequency is going around, people use words to express joy, and do not fake. We end the discussion wondering if is natural or cultural to (answer a) smile in the streets. And we kiss with our lingua.