

János (Johannes) Wilde and Max Dvořák, *or Can we speak of a Budapest school of art history?*

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The four-volume source edition that appeared as numbers 83-86 of *Enigma*, the Hungarian periodical of the theory and history of art and is now accessible on the online repository of the Hungarian Academy of Science may lay claim to considerable international attention. The publication, comprising diverse letters, writings and other documents of the art historian János (Johannes) Wilde offers an insight into the everyday life of the Vienna School of Art History (*Wiener Schule*) and into Hungarian–Austrian scholarly interactions. It also sheds light on the so-far little-known connections between the post-World War I wave of emigration and the art patronising Austrian aristocrats on the one hand and the so-far almost overlooked profound, professional and personal relationship between Wilde and Max Dvořák to which – on Wilde’s part – we owe nothing less than the edition, publication and interpretation of Dvořák’s estate in terms of the history of ideas. That is, without Wilde, posterity would have no knowledge of the historian of ideas, Dvořák, as a ‘configuration’ of the history of scholarship. Later world-famous as a Michelangelo scholar, János Wilde, who spent the greater part of his life abroad, cherished a particularly intimate relationship with his two unmarried siblings Ferenc and Margit, who remained in Hungary and after the death of their mother, lived together. The three siblings corresponded on a weekly basis; some of their invaluable correspondence is preserved in the School of Slavonic and East European Studies,¹ the greater part is kept in the Archive of the Museum of Fine Arts – Hungarian National Gallery. From this correspondence of several running meters, the first three volumes of *Enigma* include the letters relevant to the Vienna School and Dvořák, complemented with letters by Wilde’s friends, art historians, philosophers etc. – among others László Éber, Béla Fogarasi, Edith Hoffmann, Karl Maria Swoboda, Simon Meller, Elek Petrovics, József Balogh, Károly Tolnai – written to János Wilde. The fourth volume of *Enigma* is a unique document from 1944: the record of the Budapest siege written in the form of epistolary diaries by the Wilde siblings back in Hungary, reporting on the German occupation of Budapest, the situation of the Jews and the days of the siege literally from air raid to air raid. As István Bardoly writes,

János Wilde lived in Vienna until 1938, but after the Anschluss he was dismissed from his employment in the Kunsthistorisches Museum on account of his wife’s

¹ János Wilde’s estate is found in two collections in London: 1) Courtauld Institute of Art (mainly the manuscripts and art historical legacy, e.g. a few Béni Ferenczy drawings), 2) School of Slavonic and East European Studies (SSEES) Library, 11 boxes of the Wilde collection. The now published material is: WID/8: Detailed account, in personal diary format of events in Budapest between June 1942 and October 1945 by Margit Wilde and personal and official correspondence (1942-1957). The catalogue can be seen at: <http://www.ssees.ucl.ac.uk/archives/widitem.htm>. Photographs to accompany this paper by be seen by clicking [here](#).

Jewish origin.² They went to the Netherlands first and then to England, where they arrived in 1939 upon the invitation of the National Gallery. In 1940-41 they were first interned to Scotland, then to Canada as enemy aliens – Wilde was an Austrian citizen from 1927; then they lived in Aberystwyth, Wales, where the stock of several museums had been rescued. Their contact with Wilde's brother and sister was interrupted from mid-1940 to November 1945, though the siblings at home had to consider several, often adventurous possibilities of 'mailing letters'. The relatives in Hungary were informed on 25 October 1940 that they should not expect replies from their brother in Canada because the interned were not delivered their mail. (...) What motivated the Wilde siblings was not the intention to register the cold facts for posterity, but the stubborn insistence on the preservation under all circumstances of possibly the most important meaning of their lives, family unity, even if it could only be virtual. To tell always, even in those times, in thousands of letters, what life was like, what their lives consisted in.³

János Wilde, or Johannes Wilde as he was later known, the world-famous Michelangelo researcher, deputy director of the Courtauld Institute in London, who was among the first scholars to introduce the X-ray to the examination of art objects, was only twenty-three years old in the summer of 1914, a fresh graduate of the faculty of humanities. He was extremely happy as he had received a scholarship of 1,200 crowns from the Ministry of Religion and Public Education for studies in Rome. The war, however, foiled his journey, and his superior at the Museum of Fine Arts, Elek Petrovics deemed it more prudent to send the promising young man to Vienna, to Professor Max Dvořák. In his memorandum, he wrote the following:

Under the present conditions, Mr. Wilde would then supplement and complete his studies at Vienna University, in particular by attending the art history lectures and seminars of Professor Max Dvořák in the coming academic year, before his doctoral examination. He turned to me with the request of acquiring Your Excellency's kind support to this end. Mr. János Wilde, who was a top student of Budapest University has given evidence of his serious and unquestionable commitment to the art historical profession during his museum employment over the past year, which substantiates Your Excellency's trust consenting to his travel grant and proves him worthy of further support. It can rightly be expected that the aforementioned will put the opportunity of visiting Vienna University to good use under the guidance of Professor Dvořák, an outstanding educator of the students of art history by virtue of the excellence of his theory and the inspiring and fertilizing effect of his lectures, and he will become a highly valuable expert capable of performing useful services.⁴

² Art historian Júlia Gyárfás was of Jewish descent on both parental lines. The father and their children received the permission of the inner minister in 1903 to change their name from Guttmann to Gyárfás (*Budapesti Közlöny*, 21 Oct. 1903. 1). She and János Wilde got married in Vienna on 6 February 1930.

³ István Bardoly, "'Éppen ezekből állott akkor az életünk". Wilde Margit és Ferenc 1944-es feljegyzései elé' [That's what our lives consisted in at that time. Prefacing the notes of Margit and Ferenc Wilde written in 1944], *Enigma*, 2016, 86.

⁴ Mus. of Fine Arts Archive, 1914/1051 and 1915/580. – Cf.: 'Wilde János családjának írt levelei 1915–1917' *Wilde és a bécsi iskola 1*. [J. Wilde's letters to his family 1915-1917. Wilde and the Vienna School],

He was personally introduced to Dvořák by another prominent colleague at the museum, Simon Meller, who had been the curator of the Department of Prints and Drawings – an acknowledged professional workshop – of the Museum of Fine Arts since 1910. Here is a report of a playful tone to his family by Wilde:

Dearest Ones at Home, I'm coming again from Schönbrunn a bit earlier, it's the finest summer vacations, because I want to go to the Apparat [as the department was called, Cs.M.] to submit to Zimm[ermann] the manuscript and letter Meller sent. I was there in the morning, after enrolment, and the assistant received me kindly. He knew about me, he had been informed by Dvořák, who had to leave for a few days. It was funny how in the next moment of our conversation we both turned upon Strzygowski.⁵

The last clause clearly reveals how things were going on at the Vienna department. The assistant was none other than Karl Maria Swoboda; a mere six years would pass before he – together with Wilde in emigration – would be preparing for print the enormous posthumous estate of Dvořák, who died an untimely death, terminating as it were the most radiant period of the Vienna School. And something else came to grief, too: that which Paul Stirton termed as the potential of a Budapest School of Art History. The *Enigma* source publication divulges something personal about these miraculous and sad years marked by war, revolution and retaliations, and carries an ample selection of János Wilde's official and private correspondence, beside diverse other documents. These primary sources conjure up the everyday life at the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest and at the famous Vienna School, the world of the cultured Austrian aristocrats whom later Wilde befriended, and life in wartime Vienna in general which was soon to receive a multitude of Hungarian emigrants. Having finished his dissertation about the beginnings of Italian copperplate etching, Wilde did not really plan to return to Vienna – but he was forced to do so because of his role during the Republic of Soviets in Budapest. Throughout his second sojourn in Vienna he was cherishing the hope of returning, although Elek Petrovics, who had encouraged him to study in Vienna earlier, was compelled to write a wholly different letter to him. In it he informed him of the minister's decision taken after the interrogations 'by the committee in charge of examining the behaviour of the officials of the Museum of Fine Arts during the Government of Soviets'; 'Since the Minister does not deem your stay in the employment of the institute under my direction desirable, he is going to provide for your transfer from the museum soon. Please find attached the rescript pertaining to your case. Yours truly, Elek Petrovics. Budapest, 20 Sept. 1920.'⁶ The transfer was actually protracted for years, thus Wilde's second stay in the Austrian capital was no emigration but an unpaid leave from the Museum of Fine Arts still as its employee. Eventually he was discharged with pecuniary compensation in 1922; it was generally believed that he got off lightly, which greatly owed to his colleagues who took up

Eds. Csilla Markója, István Bardoly, Ágnes Körber, *Enigma*, 21, 2015, no. 83, 92: note 4, and: István Bardoly: 'Adalékok Wilde János életéhez és tevékenységéhez (1918–1922)', *Wilde és a bécsi iskola 2*, [Addenda to the life and work of J. Wilde (1918-1922)] Eds. Csilla Markója, István Bardoly & Ágnes Körber *Enigma*, 21, 2015, no. 84. 103.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 99-100.

⁶ Bardoly 2015.op.cit., 116-117.

the cudgels on his behalf, emphasising his honesty, apolitical nature, and professional correctness. At first, Wilde could only be interrogated at Moravcsik's neurological clinic. His doctor, Gyula Schuster had treated him earlier, too, so probably he was not merely hiding in the institution but he really was brought down by the calamities during and after the Republic of Councils. Though Max Dvořák welcomed him warmly in Vienna, he would not have left the professional community at home of his own will, and thus began his lifelong and far from voluntary emigration.

On 9 February 1921, he put to paper the following lines in the Grusbach mansion of Count Khuen-Belasi;

I must tell you an extremely sad piece of news. Professor Dvořák, my dearest tutor, died suddenly last night of a stroke. I can't describe now how terrible this reality is, my dear family at home will know anyway, but I briefly touch on the circumstances. I will write exhaustively as soon as possible. We arrived here together on Sunday evening. It was his request that I should accompany him on his one-week holiday which he was looking forward to with excitement. Khuen came with us cherishing the happy thought that he could spend a whole week at home undisturbed for the first time in so many years. – It is very hard to continue. We only spent 24 hours together. Monday night we went to bed after one in the morning, after a long day spent in the finest mood. The professor had a good time, was kind and sagacious with everyone – and yesterday morning, when the butler entered to wake him up, he found him unconscious on the floor by the bed. The doctor arrived in a quarter of an hour, tried everything, made every preterhuman effort, but he could not succeed. The blood spill in the brain was too powerful, there was total paralysis immediately, and all that remained to us was hold his chin lest the tongue falling back might prevent breathing. We did not leave him to the end. (...) God be with you, dearest ones at Home. The garden is beautiful under the window, the dark pines packed with freshly fallen snow and the sun is shining peacefully. They are mourning the poor professor so beautifully. Kisses, Bundsi.⁷

Although this and a few other letters already appeared in print in 2010 translated into German, and in the most adequate place, too, the *Wiener Jahrbuch*,⁸ their contents have drawn no response so much so that in the biographic part of the 200-page introduction to the latest Dvořák text publication neither Count Khuen nor János Wilde is discussed on their merit,

⁷ *Enigma*, 21.2015. no.84. 169-170.

⁸ Kókai, Károly 'Briefe von Johannes Wilde aus Wien, Juni 1920 bis Februar 1920', *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, 59, 2010, 219–234. The edition of letters prepared by Kókai unfortunately appeared with some minor errors, e. g. in place of Ernesta the Italian nickname of Ernst von Garger: Ernesto is correct. Nearly all the persons mentioned in several hundreds of letters published in some issues of the periodical *Enigma* with the title *Wilde János és a bécsi iskola* [János Wilde and the Vienna School] have been identified, cf.: 'J. Wilde's letters to his family 1915–1917', *Enigma*, 21, 2015. no. 83, 92–135; 'J. Wilde's letters to his family 1920–1921', *Enigma*, 21, 2015, no. 84, 125–174; 'J. Wilde's letters to his family 1922–1923', *Enigma*, 21, 2015, no. 85, 11–75. Editors of the letters: Csilla Markója, István Bardoly. [hereafter: *Enigma*, no. 83, 84, 85.]

but it was far from being accidental that these two were at his death bed.⁹ Nothing can be learnt about the network of personal relations that tied the world-famous Viennese art historian to the progressive aristocrats of the Monarchy (including Count Lanckoroński active in the Austrian organisation of monument protection, the Zentral-Kommission), on the one hand, and to the group of Hungarian art historians who were working at the Museum of Fine Arts at that time, on the other. This web of relations was notably more than a simple inspiration for Dvořák; it was the token of the survival of his life's work. Dvořák the historian of ideas was constructed by János Wilde for posterity in the five volume edition of the Dvořák writings, and in the introductions to the volumes. The great role played by the posthumous oeuvre in the Dvořák reception is confirmed by the words of his colleague at the Museum of Fine Arts. Edith Hoffmann, had also attended Dvořák's courses in Vienna, but only came under his influence years later when she had read this corpus:

It was only years after my university studies that I came under the influence of Max Dvořák, the professor of art history at Vienna University. At the beginning, he was the only person who exerted a great influence, and it took years before I was captured by the novelty of his writings in the history of ideas, which then changed my entire thinking.¹⁰

This is how Wilde continued his description of the circumstances of Dvořák's death:

When we arranged all necessary things, I and the count took the first train from Grusbach at daybreak yesterday for the funeral service, so that from the railway station we just made it to the Jesuit church – Dvořák's most beloved Viennese church – to attend the death mass at 11 o'clock. That means I had to get up at 3 in the night and ride a coach for two hours in the dark; the afternoon was spent at the window until dinner, in the evening I was with Swob[oda] until 1 – I was very tired and had no time for writing. Anyway, I could not even put it down for myself what had happened to me in the past 10 days, Dearest Ones at Home, so when I go home in a month's time, I will tell you everything. It was a miraculous time – God willed that such things should happen to me. I am in Vienna now for a day or two to arrange the most urgent things, but at the weekend, or on Monday the latest I will return to Emmahof. Guby, too, is only coming back from Germany tonight, and I have very important business to do with him. Today I was invited to lunch at Count Lanckoroński's, the former lord chamberlain, Dv[ořák]'s old paternal friend to whom I had to report about a lot of things. Schlosser's obituary was held at the university in the morning. My time is scheduled accurately now because there is much to do. The widow put into Swoboda's and my care (exclusively) the editing and publication of the enormous estate, Khuen became the children's guardian. Then there is the question of succession – it is very painful to deal with personal problems now, but we must be concerned with them so as to avoid later remorse that we had left something

⁹ Max Dvořák, *Schriften zur Denkmalpflege*, Gesammelt und kommentiert von Sandro Scarrocchia, Wien – Köln – Weimar, 2012. 848 pp.

¹⁰ *Új könyvek könyve*. [Book of new books], Ed. and introd. Béla Kóhalmi, Budapest, 1937, 156.

undone. The question is impossibly difficult, almost impossible to solve more or less satisfactorily.¹¹

Wilde and his colleagues failed to see to the question of succession at the Vienna department as they had hoped – the post was eventually won by Julius von Schlosser, about whom the Dvořák disciples had a devastating opinion. The Hungarian press carried the following report on the events:

To succeed professor Dvořák, who died tragically at such an early age, the philosophical faculty of the University of Vienna invited Professor Wilhelm Pinder, a renowned art historian of Leipzig University. Pinder's negative response arrived in Vienna just now. It is probably the weak Austrian currency that causes his, or other German scholars' hesitation to come to Vienna, where just a little while ago it was the greatest glory and joy to be offered a teaching post.¹²

Wilde and his colleagues nominated Wilhelm Köhler:

I think I wrote earlier that Köhler accepted the invitation, or more precisely, said yes in theory and would come here soon to negotiate. That would at least bring a former pupil of Dvořák (Dvořák's first assistant) to us, if we must put up with Schlosser, anyway. There is no important news otherwise. The Dvořák Verein's Generalsammlung is held on 9 March where we are going to read out an unpublished manuscript.¹³

But hopes were soon to vanish in thin air:

The count and countess and Köhler have been here since Tuesday, there is some event every day, usually more than one meeting, dinner, etc. On Tuesday at Swob[oda]'s, on Wednesday at the Sacher and then at countess Schönborn's (with music).[...] What is left for tonight is the send-off gathering for Köhler at the Frau Professor's [Dvořák's widow – Cs.M.] where we shall be all together again. [...] Köhler's presence was a joy in every regard. He is clever, honest, likeable who looks upon the work as a sacred duty, so it won't be his fault if he does not remain here. For now the situation is far more entangled than it was last year, the number of factors on which a lucky solution depends has been multiplied.¹⁴

Wilde wrote to Budapest on 17 March 1922, and a bit later he resignedly informed his family, 'The case of the Lehrkanzel is under a cloud, probably Schlózi will alone be professor (Köhler will be out) – but even this solution is to be happy about because the chaos going on for one and a half years has been intolerable. In the autumn I will move to my old room designated for me by Dvořák where I will be alone and can work undisturbed.'¹⁵ As the now presented

¹¹ *Enigma*, no. 84, 170–171.

¹² The question of Dvořák's successor at Vienna University. *A Műbarát*, 1, 1921, 18, 323.

¹³ *Enigma*, no. 85, 19.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 22: note 57.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 37: note 97.

Wilde letters reveal, the publication of the Dvořák corpus possibly owed more to Count Khuen and other aristocratic patrons (e.g. the mentioned Count Lanckoroński, whose obituary written by Wilde is also included in *Enigma* no.85) than to Dvořák's assistant Karl Maria Swoboda, who took a smaller share of the philological work and whose contribution to the jointly signed preface – at least the so-far elaborated sources suggest – is negligible. 'Ernesto, Mikula and the count [Ernst von Garger art historian and his wife, and Count Khuen-Belasi] all take good care of me, I can't have any problems with them around me. In Swoboda I have found a true friend,' Wilde wrote on 15 February 1921.¹⁶ On 12 March he described the beginning of the work in the following; 'I am preparing for press Dvořák's last great work, the Bruegel, and on Monday I and Swob[oda] begin the first perusal and cataloguing of the estate. By our first estimate the literary estate consists of 200,000 (!) pages. Add to that the enormous correspondence and a library of some 6000 volumes. Enough work.'¹⁷ The forthcoming letters, however, inform that while Wilde works several hours a day on the estate at the Vienna department, "Swob" is either writing his habilitation dissertation or is away travelling. The first draft of the preface, whose style also clearly bespeaks Wilde and was completed by him alone in Padua on 1 October 1923, was sent by him to Swoboda for approval; 'I have just mailed the Vorwort express to Swob[oda].'¹⁸ Count Khuen concerned himself so deeply about the fate of Dvořák's estate that he even wrote an intercessory letter to the Hungarian Minister of Religion and Public Education trying to obtain another unpaid leave for Wilde. His petition includes revealing details about the division of work:

Doctor János Wilde, assistant researcher of the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest, was not only the student but also a close friend of Professor Dvořák, who died last year. He was immediately prepared to process the estate with dr. Swoboda, Dvořák's assistant out of filial loyalty and gratitude to the beloved tutor and master, and out of compassion for his children. I was pleased to see this friendly and touching unselfishness (for he was not willing to accept any fee) not only because Wilde, just like Swoboda, does this work free of charge, out of love for their late professor, but also because none of his students were closer to the poor professor – both personally and in terms of the profession – than dr. Wilde in the last times of his life. Together with my sister he was at the side of the notable scholar until he breathed his last in my Emmahof mansion. Still in Dvořák's lifetime dr. Wilde and I corrected the recently published outstanding book on Pieter Breughel the Elder. Dr. Wilde was Dvořák's confidant on all matters and outside the professor's assistant Swoboda I know of nobody who would be as well suited for the elaboration of the estate as Wilde. What is more, it is my opinion that on certain issues Wilde would be irreplaceable for us. [...] Both of them [are absorbed in their work] on the verge of endangering their health, which has made me usher dr. Wilde toward the path of recovery twice but even [during convalescence] he immersed in his work. Wilde has familiarized himself so much with the material (learning to decipher the handwriting also took a lot of time), particularly with a certain part of the work that he undertook,

¹⁶ *Enigma*, no. 84. 172.

¹⁷ Mus. of Fine Arts, Archive, 20151/1979/32/12.

¹⁸ *Enigma*, no. 85.67.

that if we were to put this work to someone else's care, the whole year's achievements would surely be lost.¹⁹

The letter (whose full text is available in *Enigma* no. 84) reveals that it was Wilde who effectively deciphered Dvořák's manuscripts and prepared them for printing, that Count Khuen, his time permitting, was also involved in working out the conception of different publications, and that in the last years of Dvořák's life Wilde and he were among the closest collaborators, and perhaps the only intellectual partners of the professor. The establishment of the Dvořák-Verein was also a sign of the relative isolation of Dvořák, of the need to defend the Riegl-initiated traditions of the Vienna School already at that time when the impressive great theory – the historization of the concept of art – which is registered today as the product of the *geistesgeschichtliche* period of the Vienna School but which only took shape in Dvořák's last few years and posthumously, in the conception of the oeuvre edition by his disciples, still only existed in an embryonic form.

The author of the mentioned Dvořák preface, Sandro Scarrocchia, only names Khuen once, as a disciple who – when Dvořák suffered attacks of a nationalistic hue for his Czech origin – supported him, also financially. This support was mainly realised as regular invitations to Grusbach, but no more detail is revealed about this peculiar count, who also had Hungarian relatives through the Khuen-Héderváry family. As regards to attacks of a nationalistic hue, contemporaneous information can be had e.g. from the *Pesti Napló*, 20 November 1920,

The Czechs have been kicked out of Vienna University. Our correspondent in Vienna reported on the phone what a great stir was made this morning when before the start of the lectures at the eastern trade academy the students sang "Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles" in response to the Prague demonstrations. When a Czech student did not stand up during the song, he was hurled out and beaten. All Czechs were expelled from the universities and academies of Vienna and in the coming days a great demonstration against Czechs are to be held to which the Hungarians in Vienna are going to join collectively.²⁰

Count Khuen-Belasi was the central figure in the highly erudite and enlightened circle of aristocrats with surprisingly radical political views, who supported Dvořák and through him, Wilde. This support was not only elicited by political or personal attractions, but also by certain institutions of Austrian art history. For instance, the mentioned Dvořák-Verein set up in 1920 to finance the Vienna School of Art History was a foundation of Count Khuen which he later directed as well. The instrument of incorporation, a printed copy of which survives in Wilde's estate and the text of which is carried by *Enigma* no. 84,²¹ also confutes the conjecturing that the "Wiener Schule" as a concept was only a posterior construction. Wilde was eagerly looking forward to the constituent meeting of the association, for one thing, because of his new important relationship with Count Khue, 'I will probably see him at the weekend when the first sitting of the Dvořák Verein is to be held

¹⁹ *Enigma*, no. 84, 124.

²⁰ *Pesti Napló*, 20 November 1920, 4.

²¹ *Enigma*, no. 84, 24-26.

(with Dvořák's lecture on Dürer's Apocalypse) – Khuen must simply be there.²² This is how he described their first meeting;

I have been here for the third week now as a guest and art history tutor of Dr. Karl Graf Khuen-Belasi (nephew of the former Hungarian prime minister, unmarried, about 40 years of age) and I must say I have an excellent time. I stay at a marvellous country house with a park (in the woods), among friendly and refined gentlemen and women who readily observe one's need for independence. All my obligation is to read with the count and talk about art history in the evenings when he is at home, that is the dilettante hobby of the count who is otherwise surprisingly cultured and clever, a pupil and the greatest admirer of Dvořák. (Dvořák was invited here for two weeks in February with his whole family.) He professes to be a monarchist Bolshevik, which means that despite his enormous fortune he is against capitalism. And in culture, he is ultramodern. For example, I have found two copies of the *Theorie des Romans* in his library – 8,000 books! I expose my ideas with perfect liberty to him in all regards and he is always deeply interested in what I say. In art he is an enthusiastic admirer of Kokoschka, which means much more than being an admirer of Ady in Hungary. I already wrote to you how I made his acquaintance. Around New Year Dvořák had asked him to intervene at home on my behalf. Having learnt through the English mission in Vienna that I was bedridden at no.26 Hor[ánszky] street, he made every effort for months with a persistency that is astounding. His secretary showed me the replies to his letters by e.g. Kövess, Dani, Adolf Ullmann, etc. And he did so by sending them in the extremely complicated way of messengers; once he was also fined for smuggling a letter. Whenever he got some news, he immediately informed Dvořák. It cannot be put into words how kindly he received me. Blessed be the two revolutions, he said, because they caused my return to him.²³

The allusion to György Lukács's work without mentioning the name indicates that the passionate support of Dvořák and his friends won by Wilde was thanks not only to his captivating intellect and personal appeal, but also to the intricate web of intellectual relations which mediated the ideas of the Sunday Circle, a philosophically active Budapest society of thinkers, artists and scholars, to Dvořák, who – born a Czech – experienced refined and less sophisticated forms of neglect, and to the Vienna School and vice versa, both before the Republic of Soviets and after it when the Viennese intellectuals and a part of the aristocracy received the Hungarian exiles in Vienna with relief societies and aristocratic patronage. In this flow and exchange of ideas Wilde was a sort of 'hub' to borrow a term from the network researcher physicist Albert-László Barabási,²⁴ linking the Vienna School to a group of Hungarian art historians who were in some way or other connected to the circle of Lukács. These relations were on an everyday basis on the one hand, and on the other, they were stronger and more ramifying than thought earlier. Wilde's correspondence is a real sensation of the history of scholarship in an international perspective, for it helps to enlarge, sometimes

²² Ibid., 24: note 1.

²³ Ibid., 130-131.

²⁴ Albert-László Barabási: *Behálózva – a hálózatok új tudománya* [Linked: The New Science of Networks]. Budapest, 2013.

supersede our knowledge of the history of the Vienna School. Besides, for Khuen-Belasi, who thought in pan-monarchic terms and was about to marry a former wife of a Count Draskovich, and for Count Lanckoroński, who issued from a Polish historical family and was in charge of the monuments in Galicia before 1919, the Hungarian Wilde became a worthy representative – also in a political sense – of the Czech-Austrian Dvořák legacy and the token of its survival in an apparently hostile context; complemented with Count Wilczek, ‘the secret Wilde relief-fund’ as Wilde called it, was immediately activated after the professor’s death in the interest of Dvořák’s oeuvre and its interpretation, providing Wilde with accommodations, professional work in the systematisation of the Harrach picture collection, and well-paying private students in Vienna, Karl Wilczek junior and Karla Lanckorońska.

Wilde and the Vienna School

Let us return to the beginning. The Archive of the Hungarian National Gallery preserves some 3,000 letters by art historian János Wilde from the years between 1915 and 1967, of which *Enigma* has presented now a selection from the period between 1915 and 1923. The important information in the letters left out under pressure for space (but also read and processed) is given in the footnotes and references of this text, but it would be worthwhile to publish the complete correspondence for its remarkable informative richness about its age. Letters by colleagues and fellow thinkers survived in the estate of Ferenc Wilde, e.g. by Béla Fogarasi, Elek Petrovics, Károly Mannheim, László Éber, Edith Hoffman, Karl Maria Swoboda, Simon Meller, Charles (Károly) Tolnay and others also made public in this edition. Another important stock of professional material is kept in the Courtauld Institute in London, of which Wilde was deputy director from 1948, and the School of Slavonic and East European Studies Library where the replies of his family members and Margit Wilde’s notes written during World War II are kept.²⁵ Most of Wilde’s letters are addressed to his elder brother Ferenc, but they were meant for the whole family with whom he had a very close, almost startlingly intimate relationship. Kókai, who also took note of Wilde’s infantile and prematurely old, but certainly ecstatically, childish narcissistic tone, ascribed this comprehension of the family as an organic whole indivisible into individuals to the family members’ physical and psychic interdependence caused by the conditions of the war.²⁶ Yet there was more to it than that. Wilde’s siblings, Dudó and Tyumpika did not get married and after their father’s death they remained with their beloved mother nicknamed Munisika or Mumisi. Wilde’s affection was fundamentally determined by his neurotic, nervous, unquestionably oversensitive psychic constitution diagnosed as maniac by his doctor Gyula Schuster. This mental frame made him fervent and reserved, pliable and autonomous at the same time. His narcissism was not caused by egoism, but contrarily it was dictated by childlike enthusiasm. His devotion to his vocation, which governed him without any compromises, saved him in some way from having to take adult decisions – he remained the little darling of the family who lived his entire life on the intimate stage of the family without having to put up with looks of disapproval, as on this stage the notions of failure or loneliness did not exist. They maintained this stage with tooth and nail when it dawned on them that history would brutally separate them – in this sense it is true that the adverse

²⁵ The letters are to be found at: <http://www.ssees.ucl.ac.uk/archives/widitem.htm>.

²⁶ Kókai 2010, op.cit., 219–220.

circumstances did enhance their feeling of coherence. A considerable part of the wartime correspondence is about the physical well-being of the young man, especially about his dietary problems, despite the two parcels of food a week arriving from home packed with bacon, jam, butter, cakes, and although it was hard in Vienna to get eggs, fruit, bakeries, he could have a warm meal every day. Shortage of meat meant for him having pheasant or mutton instead of chicken or beef; Wilde notes in a brooding tone that he would definitely need five lumps of sugar a day. The worries of the family were probably fed by Wilde's digestive problems, bowel complaints entailed by his neurotic condition; they all kept measuring their weight accurately, and Wilde was apparently alarmed by his weight of 70 kg. His narcissist passages were performances on the family stage – there is hardly any word in the letters about the role or sheer existence of his former pupil and future wife Juliska Gyárfás, and also merely the social or technical background of his professional activity can be learnt from them without hardly any mention of his thoughts or discoveries. The Wilde siblings' accuracy, their exactitude, which takes comic shape in diverse lists, catalogues and memoranda, is also the guarantee that their accounts allow a glimpse of the entire web of intellectual relations in addition to the general climate of the age, without the pedagogical furore to depict and conserve everything to which all three were disposed ever dawning on them. Sometimes Wilde's jolly remarks addressed to Dudó seem to imply a grain of (self) irony, but it is hard to put a finger on it in the mutual murmur softening almost to cooing, which continuously ensured the emotional coherence of the family members like the purring of cats.

However, without this moving choir gently humming in the tone of unconditional love, Wilde's (self) evaluating speeches, monologues, which would have appeared childish bragging outside the family stage and would therefore have remained unsaid, would not have survived. Shearman, one of Wilde's students in London, sounds quite apologetic in his commemoration for not being able to write anything personal about him as the professor was so reserved and tactful. A similar key is struck by his introductory lines arguing that not all art historians must excel in conceptual or methodological theory, it is sufficient to perform decent, high-quality art historical work.²⁷ It is indeed peculiar that in his letters Wilde keeps reporting about Dvořák's growing appreciation of him, he was already Dvořák's confident as his student, and he even believed he was the only one among the students who did understand the professor (minutely detailed descriptions are given about the running and atmosphere of the Dvořák lectures and *privatissima*), whereas Wilde's studies written in the 1920s and even '30s, of which a selection is also published now, suggest a traditional style historical attitude, a refined connoisseurship rather than the pervasive influence of the history of ideas or Dvořák. In his first semester in Vienna he wrote to his family on 2 December 1915, 'Yesterday Dv[orák] held a beautiful lecture again, I'm glad I could share at least with Swoboda my happiness for being here now under Dv. – It's so sad his own students don't understand his frame of mind. I'm particularly proud of understanding it so well.'²⁸ His admiration for Dvořák kept growing in the first period,

²⁷ John Shearman: 'Johannes Wilde (1891–1970)', *Akten des XXV. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte. Bd. I. Wien und die Entwicklung der kunsthistorischen Methode*. Hrsg. Stefan Krenn, Martina Pippal, Wien, 1984, 91–98.

²⁸ 2 December 1915. – *Enigma*, no. 83, 110.

Today, after a week's break, there is a Dv. class again, which makes me very happy. There will be no seminars with him or with Schlosser, instead we are going with Dv. to see the newly arranged exhibition at the picture gallery of the Academy next Wednesday morning. The participants of the last privatissimum were: 6 boys (all 4th- or 5th-year students) and 4 girls (even older); they will remain the permanent audience. What silence these ten people can produce is quite extraordinary, as if the whole group were under a magic spell.²⁹

Later their relationship grew more and more intense. On 18 March 1917, he wrote laconically, 'Fraternizing with Dv. is going on in the evenings. My work is in progress.'³⁰ Then, 'The first privatium was yesterday. The day before Dv. held a very beautiful lecture. The three of us with Swob chatting after it, I said a few things about the contents of the lecture: suddenly Dv. burst out laughing. "Das will ich even in der nächsten Vorlesung ausführen."³¹ Such things have a truly beneficial effect on the self-confidence of a sceptic like me.'³² Somewhat contrapuntal to this lack of self-confidence is the following remark, 'Now I must go up to see Strzyg[owski] because he has announced my research report to his audience again. He's a terrible figure, but I understand why he doesn't want to let go of me, of all people, from his clutches. This obstacle is still to be cleared out of the way. The start of this semester by Dv. was rather bloodless, I must say.'³³ In 1917, when having finished his dissertation he returned to Budapest, his farewell to the Viennese department was almost heartless:

I've got a letter from Dvořák too, salutation lieber Herr Kollege, the summer holiday did him good, in Sept. he's going to Karlsbad for a cure, he is silent about Pest. [...] Alas, glorious capital of Austria, I'm leaving you with almost as much joy as I arrived with. However short the period of two years I've spent here may seem, it has brought along a lot of new things, it has wholly re-kneaded me, making me more resolute. But that is not to the credit of Vienna but to myself and to the work that I had done in the preceding years, too, at that time without visible results. I am looking forward to the future perfectly calm.³⁴

This calmness, however, did not prove quite justified. When the harassment by the authorities after the events of the Republic of Soviets and the role he undertook in it – inventorying and exhibiting the nationalised works of art in the Kunsthalle, as well as holding a few university lectures at the Meller department, which had the potential of a real Budapest School for a brief period – sent him to Vienna again firmly determined to stay but for a short time, Dvořák received him as a beloved colleague worthy of support. He and Tietze showered him with job offers and invitations including such prestigious positions as editing the *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* and the *Thieme-Becker Künstlerlexikon*,

²⁹ 11 December 1915. – *Enigma*, no. 83, 111.

³⁰ 18 March 1917. – HNG Archive, 20151/1979/30/29.

³¹ 'That's what I want to embark upon in my next lecture.'

³² 6 May 1917. – HNG Archive, 20151/1979/30/94.

³³ 4 May 1917. – HNG Archive, 20151/1979/30/95.

³⁴ 25 August 1917. – HNG Archive, 20151/1979/30/85.

counselling for Guby, the leader of Hölzel Verlag. This is Wilde's account of a public lecture by Dvořák:

The lecture was at the Österr. Museum for an entrance fee (Dvořák set one of his 5 free tickets aside for me in the first row, which I quickly swapped for a worse place, lest I should have to entertain some notabilities in front. This is an old tradition from the time of Wickhoff and Riegl, there is such a lecture once every year in a highly ceremonious form. (An audience of some 800 were in the room and another hundred or so were in wait in the vestibule for returned tickets.) Dvořák spoke for two hours on end, very beautifully, ending in quite a confessional tone which completely mesmerized the audience. He spoke of utterly new things never discussed before and did not cite anyone but St. Ignatius, St. Francis de Sales, St. Theresa, Dostoyevsky – and at one point: me – shouting into the ears of 800 people that »auf diese Beziehungen hat uns mein Freund Wilde aufmerksam gemacht«, referring to the second unwritten part of my dissertation that was only known to him from our discussions.³⁵ The audience comprised representatives of all ranks, classes and mentalities from bolsheviks down to princes (Liechtenstein and Lanckoroński), including all officials of all museums – even Strzygowski was present. Before the lecture I met Baldass, who was extremely kind. After the lecture there was dinner in a private room at the Imperial, I was to take the countess there earlier (not Steinmann), and then the count had me sit between her and Dvořák (we were ten, Kokoschka, the Swob[oda]s, etc.).³⁶

Another day, another letter:

I'm coming from Dvořák's collegium, who started to introduce his view of the history of 'mannerism' today – that is, my narrow field of study – as he informed me when we met by chance before his class, saying how difficult this undertaking was for him, and in fact these lectures ought to be held by me. The count, who happened to be with me because he'd called on me at the Apparat visiting Vienna for a day, listened wide-eyed. He emphatically invited me to visit him, so I promised to spend some time in Grusbach this winter when I have the possibility. 'Mein Haus steht Ihnen zu jeder Zeit offen.'³⁷ He was happy like a child to be able to have a conversation with me again.³⁸

Or,

We are closer to each other with Mikula and Ernesto than ever. Munisi and the others must be reassured that I am very warmly welcomed by them, which is invaluable until I find my footing wholly on my own. They like me very much (and I like them, too) and they do their best to prove it in most diverse ways. They are honest, decent,

³⁵ 'These connections have been pointed out to me by my friend Wilde.'

³⁶ 29 October 1920. – *Enigma*, no. 84, 145-146.

³⁷ 'You're welcome at my house any time.'

³⁸ 16-18 November 1920. – *Enigma*, no. 84. 150.

good people which I want to emphasize in my first letter of the New Year, too. The other great help is Dvořák. I have a genuinely friendly relationship with him. He likes me and has great appreciation for me. He tells me about all his problems, plans, discusses his works, gives me his manuscripts to read. They say when I don't call in at the university for a few days, he asks everyone whether they have seen me and sends word to me to go and see him because he'd like to talk to me. When I wished him »all the best« for the new year, he said: 'Das Beste ist dass Sie hier sind'.³⁹

However, Wilde was treated with the respect due to an extraordinary talent not only by Dvořák and the Viennese colleagues, particularly his friends Zimmermann, Baldass, Swoboda, Garger, but also by his colleagues at his first place of work called with affection Alma mater: The Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest. In their letters, the former colleagues reported to him about the matters of the institution nicknamed Muzi and about the events of the Hungarian art historical community including the succession to Pasteiner, the storms caused by the announcement to fill the vacant chair of the Budapest university department. No less was at stake than later in Vienna, and the winning conservative archaeologist Antal Hekler, 'the laughing fourth' (beside Éber, Gerevich and Meller) caused a similar break in the Budapest department to the triumph of Schlosser in Vienna. A highly promising period came to an end here as there. It is surprising what confidential tasks were assigned to the beginner Wilde in his twenties – who would have had good chances to create a school on a par with the Vienna School as professor at the department chaired by Meller, especially if Fülep, Antal and later Hauser and Tolnay could have been won for the school. Even more surprising is the tone of the letter written by his superior then director of the Museum of Fine Arts Elek Petrovics to young Wilde;

The new acquisitions have been received with much benevolence. And that was truly gratifying. Whatever we may think of the approval by the public, this has positive gain for a public institution; at least one hopes so, and also that it may allow for freer activity and more possibilities. I do know that you share my and our feelings, and I do hope you know, how *very* dear this fact to me is. I am thanking you for your congratulation again in this sense. Apparently, Mr. Zimmermann and Mr. Baldass were truly interested; Mr. Baldass expressed his wish to write for *Kunst und Kunsthandwerk*⁴⁰, which is a great pleasure to me.⁴¹

Wilde's attachment to the Muzi was still inswerving. 'Petr[ovics] is going to write a petition to get some benefit allotted to me for the summer semester, too. (I asked M[eller] to intervene on both matters, which he gladly undertook and behold, performed well.) That it was successful proves again where my true Alma Mater is.'⁴²

The correspondence of Wilde's first Vienna period in 1915-1917 reveals that he did not only mediate permanently between the Wiener Schule and the Museum of Fine Arts, arranging meetings for Simon Meller or Elek Petrovics, acquiring photo reproductions for

³⁹ 'The best thing is that you are here.' 8 January 1921. – *Enigma*, no. 84, 159-160.

⁴⁰ Ludwig Baldass, 'Neuerwerbungen des Budapester Museums der Bildenden Künste', *Kunst und Kunsthandwerk*, 20, 1917, 11/12, 387-410.

⁴¹ Elek Petrovics – to János Wilde, Budapest, 4 June 1917. – *Enigma*, no. 84, 60.

⁴² János Wilde – to Margit Wilde, Vienna, 26 May 1917. – *Enigma*, no. 83, 126.

Dvořák and Hungarian special literature for Swoboda, and doing a good job in getting Dvořák to support Meller's application for the department chair with a review of symbolic weight, the subject of which would have been Meller's attribution: he attributed equestrian statue in the Museum of Fine Arts attributed to Leonardo.⁴³ Dvořák took the side of the attribution to Leonardo, which Wilde also agreed with, in a public lecture. Besides, Wilde also took part in the Viennese acquisitions of the Museum of Fine Arts upon Petrovics' request, attending auctions, giving expert opinion and purchasing or mediating pictures. This is how he reported about the success of Meller and the Leonardo attribution in Vienna,

It was a pleasant surprise that Dvořák spoke about our Leonardo for two hours as a methodically highly important case; it was as part of the practice course, this time in the Festsaal for an audience of some 40 people, after having thrashed out all counterarguments. His conclusion is: we can safely declare that the bronze is a work by the hand of Lo. He spoke with such enthusiasm, alone, without putting questions, only drawing me into the discussion at the end – that it was around half past 8 that we finished. He often mentioned Meller amidst the warmest complimentary praises. Of course I had to report on it in detail right away. I'm off now somewhat tired to the Albertina. Kisses, Bu.⁴⁴

His good diplomatic skills governed his efforts to tighten different relations between Hungarians and the Vienna department:

True, I was rather late for the seminar yesterday, but it was just as well because I was thus spared of the agony of the first ten minutes. Dvořák usually begins by putting us a question which then elicits a sepulchral and unnerving silence before the discussion gets somehow started, usually with Dvořák's soliloquium. Seeing me enter yesterday, he turned to me for help. Then he used me frequently until 8 o'clock. I was in a good mood, my answers were pat. – I don't know if that put him in such high spirits, but when after the seminar we went up to Dvořák's room, he handed me a copy of his latest work that had come out the day before. (He's only got three copies from the press so far, he gave one to Swob[oda] who had shown it to me before the seminar, and he kept one for himself). 'Katechismus der Denkmalpflege', he wrote it for the wider public with lots of pictures upon the minister's request. (Tyumpika will have to read it, too!) Filled with gratitude, I of course accompanied him home, while we were spinning yarns. – Now, that's what I'm going to do: I'll buy a copy for myself in the

⁴³ Meller, Simon: Die Reiterdarstellungen Leonardos und die Budapester Bronzestatuette. *Jahrbuch der Königlich Preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, 62, 1916 (1917), 213–250. Cf. also on the statue on display on the occasion of the CIHA congress held in Budapest in 1969: G. Aggházy, Mária: *La statue équestre et les statues équestres de Leonardo*. Exposition du Musée des Beaux Arts de Budapest, 1969, and: G. Aggházy Mária: *Leonardo lovasszobra*. [Leonardo's equestrian statue] Budapest, 1972. The matter has not been settled conclusively, the statuette is registered in the Museum of Fine Arts as *attributed* to Leonardo, inv.no. 5362. See the most recent summary:

http://www.artmagazin.hu/artmagazin_hirek/megmeretve_avagy_lehet-e_a_lovas_leonardo_alkotasa_-_a_szepmuveszeti_muzeum_kisbronz_a_washingtonban.1006.html

⁴⁴ 19 January 1917. – *Enigma*, no. 83, 114–115.

shop and ask Dvořák to dedicate it to Majovszky and I'll send it to him by registered mail. I think that's a really good idea.⁴⁵

Around this time Wilde, an old friend of the philosopher Béla Fogarasi, a pillar of the Sunday Circle, was still on relatively good terms with another Circle member, Frici or Frigyes Antal, but this friendship went bad particularly during the Republic of Soviets, owing first of all to Antal's personality traits, his unscrupulous ambition and aggressiveness. By contrast, his friendship with art historian Kálmán Pogány was undiminished, about whose militant and enigmatic figure the Wilde letters are the first to provide new information after the fundamental study by Júlia Szabó.⁴⁶ The letters also carry a lot of new data on the lives of two great artist friends of Wilde, József Nemes Lampérth and Béni Ferenczy. As regards to the web of relations of Hungarian art history, perhaps the most exciting letters are those by young Károly Tolnai (later Charles de Tolnay), who belonged to the progressive core of the Museum of Fine arts only figuratively, but already looked upon Wilde when he was in Vienna as his mentor and regularly reported to him and to Fülep about his latest readings and experiences. Reading his sparkling analyses, one is simply awed by the autonomy of the value judgments of this ingenuous young man under the spell of the Sunday Circle and the Wiener Schule nicknamed Apparat.

In the meantime I've read Dvořák's 'Palazzo di Venezia' but I must admit that I am not quite convinced of its evolutionist perspective. The work is simply the application of Wickhoff's 'Wiener Genesis' to early Christian art. What I found somewhat affected and laboured concerning Roman art (illusionism) I find wholly untenable with the Roman mosaics ('Farbenillusionismus', 'Kompositionen illusionismus' etc.). I think this early Christian painting had a drive at quite another form than illusionism (at least that's what the reproductions suggest; maybe face to face with the original works Dvořák's standpoint would convince me – possibly, but not likely). Anyway, the book was a good reading and I really liked some of the ideas. Now I'm reading Rintelen's 'Giotto', howling with delight. Few artists have found interpreters with an artist's frame of mind as Giotto has. About this book and Löwy's 'Naturwiedergabe' I'm going to write in my next letter. Now I'd like to apologize again, Sir, for having done my work so inaccurately. I hope you and your family are in good health. All members of the Apparat and Garger, Dr. Baldass, dr. Zimmermann are sending you their warmest wishes. I remain yours truly, Károly Tolnai.⁴⁷

In *Enigma* no. 85 we present, by courtesy of *The Journal of Art Historiography*, that is, of Professor Richard Woodfield, the study entitled *The Vienna School in Hungary – Antal, Wilde and Fülep* by Paul Stirton, professor of the Bard Graduate Center, New York,⁴⁸ in which a very interesting conception is outlined in regard to Hungarian art historiography.

⁴⁵ 9 February 1917. – *Enigma*, no. 83, 116.

⁴⁶ Szabó Júlia: Pogány Kálmán, művészettörténetünk elfeledett alakja [Kálmán Pogány, a forgotten figure of Hungarian art history], In: Szabó Júlia: *Utak és tanulságok*, Ed. Marosi Ernő. Budapest, 2014, 472–484.

⁴⁷ Károly Tolnai – to János Wilde, 1 February 1919. – *Enigma*, no. 84, 77-78.

⁴⁸ Paul Stirton: A bécsi iskola Magyarországon – Antal, Wilde és Fülep [The Vienna School in Hungary – Antal, Wilde and Fülep]. *Enigma*, 21. 2015. no. 85. 81-99.

This article has two principal aims. The first is straightforward: to outline the approach and careers of a group of Hungarian-born art historians who trained in Vienna and who came together in Budapest during and immediately after the First World War. This was a critical moment in Hungarian history, and a critical moment in the understanding of Modernity in Central Europe. The radical intellectual climate, and the experience of war and revolution exposed these scholars to new concepts of art and culture, challenging many of the aesthetic principles they had acquired in Vienna. For some in the group, however, it was possible to envisage an approach to art history that bridged these two camps – the Vienna School and the Lukács circle in Budapest. This is now recognized as one of the sources of the social history of art that thrived in the mid to late twentieth century. The second aim of the article is less conventional. In tracing the dispersal of this group and their subsequent careers, a contrast is made with some of the approaches to art historical scholarship that did develop in Hungary in the inter-war period. By implication, I wish to suggest that a distinctive type of art history could have developed in Hungary if the political situation had been more conducive. To understand the significance of the ‘generation of 1919’, it may help to sketch in some of the background to art history as an academic discipline in Hungary.⁴⁹

After the summary of the history of the specialty, Stirton embarks on listing the members of the ‘generation of 1919’.

This group was mostly made up of pupils of Max Dvořák and they studied in the Institut between 1912 and the early 1920s. They were Frigyes Antal (1887-1954), Janos Wilde (1891-1970), Károly Tolnai (1899-1981), Edith Hoffmann (1888-1945), and Jenő Lányi (1902-40). Their circle included several other art historians; Otto Benesch (1896-1964: another pupil of Dvořák) and Arnold Hauser (1892-1978) who later studied art history in Berlin under Adolf Goldschmidt. My reading of this group’s significance lies in the fact that they congregated in Budapest during and immediately following the First World War where they were exposed to a new set of interests, largely deriving from the increased left-wing political slant of the Budapest intelligentsia which, in turn, prompted a radical revision of their received ideas of art history. When they came together as a loose grouping they were still young, if precocious, students. Antal had successfully completed his doctoral dissertation on conflicting stylistic tendencies in French painting between the mid eighteenth century and the Restoration of 1815. Wilde was still working on his dissertation under Dvořák on early Italian etching (completed in 1918), as was Benesch (on Rembrandt’s drawings, completed in 1921). The focus for their association and early work was the prints and drawings department of the Szépművészeti Múzeum (The Museum of Fine Arts) where all three were employed as assistants or volunteers.⁵⁰

At first glance, this enumeration may appear strange for a Hungarian reader, since Austrian Otto Benesch is an odd man out among Hungarian art historians. As far as we

⁴⁹ Stirton 2015, op. cit. 81.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 83-84.

know, Benesch only stayed in Hungary for a few months upon Wilde's initiative, helping to prepare the exhibition of art works nationalised, that is, seized by the People's Commissariat of Public Education. Benesch was needed for the attribution of the art works. Wilde's relationship with him was rather controversial; before his invitation this decent, affectionate young man had the following to declare about Benesch; 'Dv[orák] is to terminate his lectures tomorrow, poor man, he has lost much weight, he doesn't look too well. – Tyumpika is right: Benesch ought to be treated more curtly, for he doesn't consider anyone's views but his own. Sometimes I have real fits of nausea when I see him.'⁵¹ Though Wilde was eventually satisfied with the work Benesch had done in Budapest, he did not belong among his close friends and surely he was not a member of the generation of 1919 of Hungarian art historians. Just like Frigyes Antal, Benesch was treated with some reservation by his colleagues already before 1919; 'I don't let Benesch come too close to me, he must learn to behave decently. (That's not something to be learnt, though, you can't eliminate bad character in people. Just try to teach Mister Frici⁵² to behave. All you can and must do is protect yourself against such people', Wilde wrote to his family on 24 March 1917.⁵³ Though Edith Hoffmann was an employee of the Museum of Fine Arts and she did attend Dvořák's lectures, she did not complete her studies with him and, as mentioned earlier, she only realized Dvořák's real significance later. Young Hauser, by contrast, could not be Dvořák's student in person in the period at issue,⁵⁴ as he was at home until 1919, then he went to Italy and later to Berlin. Wilde doesn't mention him in his letters, but Béni Ferenczy (whose outspoken correspondence with the Wildes is planned to be published in the next issue of *Enigma*, in 2018) wrote to Wilde rather tartly, 'Hauser is a scoundrel. He lives here like a profiteer – doing nothing – at a boarding-house in Unter den Linden for 400,000 marks a day – golden bracelet, patent leather shoes, Opera, Gylt, all you want – he doesn't meet anyone, except perhaps bankers?'⁵⁵ This remark clearly shows what Wilde and his circle thought of Hauser. Nor does Wilde mention Lányi's name until 1923; he was probably not involved in this loose grouping for the possible reason that Lányi was Schlosser's student and as such, he was 'on the opposite side'. However, Lányi's real place in the history of the discipline is still to be explored fully by Hungarian art historiography despite the paper on Lányi by Ágnes Körber (also contributing to the present Wilde edition) published in the five-volume manual of the great figures of Hungarian art historiography, '*Humans, not tail-coats.*' – *The great figures of Hungarian art historiography*.⁵⁶ As Ernő Marosi has warned, despite the innumerable monographic results of the bustling Hungarian art historiographic research in the past

⁵¹ 8 March 1917. – *Enigma*, no. 83, 119.

⁵² Frigyes Antal

⁵³ *Enigma*, no. 83, 121.

⁵⁴ *A század nagy tanúi* [Great witnesses of the century], Ed Borus Rózsa, Budapest, 1978, 128-129.

⁵⁵ Béni Ferenczy – to Ferenc Wilde, Potsdam, 20 July 1923. – HNG Archive, 20151/1979/23.

⁵⁶ Körber Ágnes: 'Lányi Jenő (1902-1940)', *Ars Hungarica*, 31, 2003, 281-298; Körber Ágnes: Lányi Jenő (1902-1940). '*Emberék, és nem frakkok.*' – *A magyar művészettörténetírás nagy alakjai. Tudománytörténeti esszégyűjtemény* [Humans, not tail-coats. – The great figures of Hungarian art historiography. Collection of essays in the history of the discipline], Eds Bardoly István & Markója Csilla, Budapest, 2007, 463-468; Körber Ágnes, 'Lányi Jenő, a Donatello-kutató' [Jenő Lányi, the Donatello researcher], *Magyar művészettörténészek, magyar művészettörténet a vészkorokban* [Hungarian art historians, Hungarian art history in the Holocaust], Ed Markója Csilla & Bardoly István, *Enigma*, 21, 2014, no. 80, 70-80.

decade, the overall picture of the period will hardly be clearer without the exploration and analyses of the connections and networks:

That is the danger implied by all biographic collections, dictionaries, etc., this most primitive literary genre of conjuring up historical information, which has the additional drawback that you can't see the wood for the 'large' or small trees. [...] The genre of 'parallel lives' has depended on a *tertium comparationis* from times immemorial, which is beyond the life paths, personal convictions; in our case, it is the discipline, the profession itself.⁵⁷ The current edition of Wilde's correspondence, just as the four volumes containing art historian Anna Zádor's recollections,⁵⁸ or the double *Enigma* number containing Tibor Gerevich documents hopefully followed by another volume soon will contribute to this 'tertium comparationis'.⁵⁹

That said, Stirton's enumeration of this not even 'loose grouping' ought to be conceived as a photograph taken sometime in 1919, at a moment when Austrian Benesch was also busy in the Museum of Fine Arts, together with the zealous and talented group of art historians: Hoffmann, Pogány, Meller, Antal, Wilde – in Budapest between his Viennese studies and Viennese emigration – and the regular visitor at the Department of Prints and Drawings Tolnay, while on the far right the museum director, himself not an art historian by training, Elek Petrovics, is watching them full of anxieties and solicitous care, withdrawn from the events, and the figure of László Éber, official of the National Commission on Monuments working in the same building can also be made out vaguely in the background. Indeed, it is perhaps worthwhile to copy – symbolically – young Hauser's figure into this fictive snapshot, too, as he – like Antal, Wilde and Tolnay, who was also still a student – cultivated intense relationships with the group of Lukács, the Sunday Circle. Or, for that matter, the art critic-philosopher Lajos Fülep might also have a place in the photo who belonged to the Sunday Circle too, though at that time he had nothing to do with the Museum of Fine Arts. It is important to note at this point that although Hauser recalled having seen Wilde in the Sunday Circle in Budapest, according to Béla Balázs's diaries Wilde first (and last) visited the circle in Vienna, and then, too, he appeared quite uncommunicative. Since Wilde stayed in Vienna from 1915 when the Sunday Circle was founded and he never mentions the circle in his letters, it is most likely that Balázs remembers more exactly. At the same time, through Antal and mainly through Fogarasi, who was a close friend of his, and who invited him to lecture in the Free School of Spiritual Sciences, Wilde probably kept being informed on the circle of Lukács and its intellectual performance, even though he did not regard the Sunday Circle as a serious professional forum. As regards to Fülep, there is proof that Wilde read his articles in Vienna and most probably spoke about them to Dvořák. This is how Wilde's family responded to Fogarasi's invitation (which he declined):

⁵⁷ Marosi Ernő, 'Művészettörténet-írás, művészettörténészek' [Art historiography, art historians], *Emberek, és nem frakkok*, 2007, op. cit. 11.

⁵⁸ *Zádor Anna I–IV*, Eds Markója Csilla, Bardoly István. *Enigma*, 15, 2008. no. 54, 55, 57 and 16, 2009. no. 58.

⁵⁹ *A római iskola*. [The School of Rome] Eds. Markója Csilla & Bardoly István, *Enigma*, 16, 2009, no. 59 and *Gerevich Tibor (1882–1954)* Eds Markója Csilla & Bardoly István, *Enigma*, 16, 2009, no. 60.

I thought you'd be amused by my conversation with Fogarasi, that's why I put it down. That he did not reply to your letter of refusal might be the peculiar absentmindedness of great acumen; Dudi is very angry, he says he doesn't understand how he can't see, or doesn't expect you to have enough foresight that only to consider such a plan would cost you a lot of time and energy (even if he might only want some program for their prospectus, or something like that). After all, your new office in the autumn is awaiting you with a thousand tasks, and if you should have time, you'll have many more important programs on your agenda, and if you want to appear, there are other ensembles than Hauser et al.'s 'free school' - of course, a Viennese doctor and an 'iron' Christian, let alone a government official, would come in useful. [In Ferenc Wilde's handwriting:] Quite to the contrary, I think Meller didn't respond because being a clever man he realized that this year it was quite impossible to get but a single class scheduled with them; - as Tyumpika writes: you will have your office there, you'll have to familiarize yourself with the work well (they did so, too, at the beginning), and if you can take on work outside the office and to hold lectures, then e.g. there is the business or ensemble of Éber and his colleagues, that would mean more in the scholarship and in the ministry than any private school. That can wait.⁶⁰

As for Lányi, it is hard to envision him in this loose association because he only finished secondary school in 1920. In spite of all that, Stirton's fictive snapshot did capture a realistic possibility termed by him in a former article⁶¹ the Budapest School, even though this Budapest School – as he put it – could never be realised in Budapest.

Wilde, Antal and Hauser played a considerable role in developing art history as an academic discipline in Britain, and the latter two helped give the social history of art considerable currency in British academic circles in the period after the Second World War. But these figures remained isolated individuals, remote from the physical and intellectual environment that shaped their core ideals. Any hopes for a school of art history in Budapest after the heroic period of the First World War, which might have taken the principles of the Vienna School and developed them into a new and vital set of intellectual tools based on the theories emerging from the *Sonntagskreis*, were ended with the dispersal of the scholars. The raw materials for a sophisticated social history of art were present in Budapest during the latter years of the First World War but this could not develop in the post-war regime and would have to wait until after the Second World War to make a substantial appearance in print.⁶²

We dedicated the numbers of *Enigma* devoted to Wilde and the Vienna School to art historian Gábor Pataki, the editor of *Új Művészet* in honour of his sixtieth birthday. He, of all art historians, with his bottomless curiosity and apparently limitless professional knowledge, focusing his attention predominantly on the European School and the great generation of the

⁶⁰ *Enigma*, no. 83, 127: note 157.

⁶¹ Paul Stirton, The 'Budapest School' of Art History, *Kultúra, nemzet, identitás. A VI. Nemzetközi Hungarológiai Kongresszuson*. [Culture, nation, identity. At the 6th International Congress of Hungarology] Eds. Jankovics József & Nyerges Judit, Budapest, 2011, 144–150.

⁶² Stirton 2015, op. cit., *Enigma*, no. 85, 98-99.

Csilla Markója

János (Johannes) Wilde and Max Dvořák,
or Can we speak of a Budapest school of art history?

long sixties, is capable of assessing what these fault lines mean for Hungarian art history. In this twentieth-century history, which is all about interruptions and less and less optimistic restarts, we keep jumping from fault line to fault line, but as long as characters like János Wilde, or the celebrated person, and many others are involved in the story, we have reason to be proud.

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