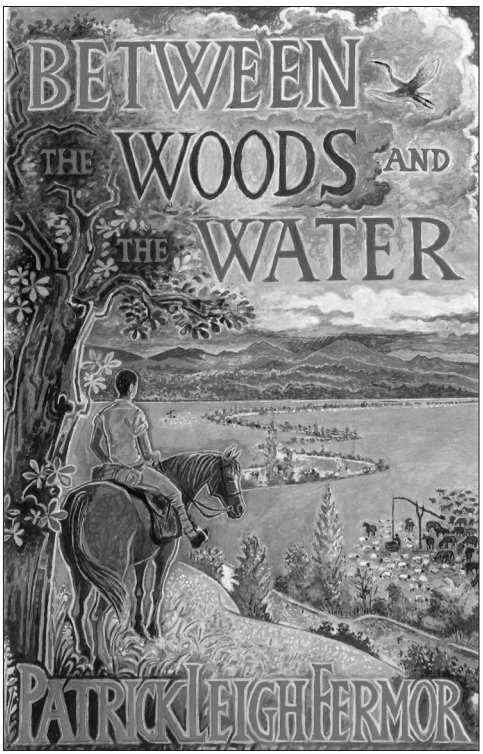
"Triple Fugue" Revisited
Patrick Leigh Fermor, "István" and "Angéla"

Gavin Bowd



Patrick Leigh Fermor, *Between the Woods and the Water* (1986)

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In *Between the Woods and the Water* (1986), the second volume recounting his "Great Trudge" from the Hook of Holland to Constantinople, Patrick Leigh Fermor (1915–2011) crossed the sixth frontier of his journey, at Curtici, on 27 April 1934. In Greater Romania, he discovered lands still deeply affected by the consequences of the Treaty of Trianon. The marches of Transylvania were "the most resented frontier in Europe and recent conversations in Hungary had cloaked it with an added shadow of menace."[1] Recommended by Count Pál Teleki, the Hungarian geographer and politician, Leigh Fermor first sojourned with a Magyar aristocracy washed up by frontier changes and agrarian reform. As Leigh Fermor moved south, he accustomed himself with a Romanian language that is both other and familiar: "How odd to find this Latin speech marooned so far from its kindred!"[2] There was also movement into a socio-economic otherness: "The industrial revolution had left these regions untouched and the rhythm of life had remained many decades behind the pace of the West."[3] Crossing these debatable lands, devouring erudite con-

versation and country house libraries, he assessed the competing Hungarian and Romanian claims on Transylvania. One side insisting on a vacuum to fill, the other considering this territory an ethnic hot bed, the young Briton politely concluded that "justice to both sides was and is impossible."[4]

"Triple Fugue"

AFTER WEEKS with aristocrats of the Banat, notably Count Jenő Teleki in his castle (*kastély*) at Kápolnás (today Căpâlnaş, Arad County, Romania), Leigh Fermor discovered Transylvania proper near the village of Zam (Hung. Zám, Germ. Sameschdorf, today in Hunedoara County, Romania), on the Maros River. He stayed at a mansion occupied by Xénia Csernovits (1909–1991), described as a sloe-eyed, ivory-skinned thirty year old woman of Serbian ancestry. In reality, she was twenty five and unhappily married to a banker working in nearby Deva. According to Leigh Fermor's account, he was smitten. Oddly, in subsequent pages, Xénia becomes "Angéla," a free spirited but unhappily married woman a few years older than Leigh Fermor. According to this account, they rapidly become lovers. In a footnote, Leigh Fermor justifies the use of pseudonyms as necessary protection of friends trapped behind the Iron Curtain. Another acquaintance, given the protective pseudonym of "István," is Elemér von Klobusziczky (1899–1986), who lived on the Gurasada (Guraszáda, Gursaden) estate further east from Zam. A former Hussar and sixteen years older than Leigh Fermor, Elemér seems to have been an older brother figure for the young Englishman. In *Between the Woods and the Water*, they share military interests and fantasies, as well as tumbles in the hay with Romanian peasant girls.

Together, Leigh Fermor, "István" and "Angéla" borrow a car and embark on the "Triple Fugue" that provides some of the travelogue's most vivid and memorable passages. For example:

> *We were storming and bucketing through the land of Canaan. Rows of beehives, brought up for the summer, were aligned by the edge of the woods. The slopes were striped with vines and scattered with sheaves and ricks, and chaff from threshing mingled with the dust. Flocks and herds were beginning to throw longer shadows when we reached a high point with an entire town spread below; and, getting out under the walls of a vigilant eighteenth-century citadel, we gazed across an untidy fall of roofs.*[5]

During this whistle-stop motor tour of the heart of Transylvania, the discovery of Cluj (Kolozsvár, Klausenburg) or Sighişoara (Segesvár, Schässburg) makes

the young Englishman more acutely aware of the ethnic, linguistic and religious patchwork he is traversing. Trying to hide their illicit relationship, "Angéla" and Leigh Fermor nevertheless spend the night together in the Bánffy Palace, Cluj, awakening to the schismatic bells of a multi-ethnic and multi-denominational city. With "István," they get tipsy on the house cocktails of the city's Hotel New York. Realizing that time is running out, "István" puts his foot on the accelerator so "Angéla" can catch the train from Deva (Déva, Diemrich) to Budapest.

Leigh Fermor's "Triple Fugue," written in the 1980s, is very much a flight of fancy. As Michael O'Sullivan points out, the author did not set foot in Cluj until his tour of Ceauşescu's Romania in 1982. Indeed, in November 1984, Leigh Fermor confided to his mentor Rudi Fischer, a Budapest-based scholar who gave him copious advice for *Between the Woods and the Water*, his "guilty secret, which you are the only living soul to share."[6] O'Sullivan adds that the descriptions in "Triple Fugue" drew heavily upon a book borrowed from Fischer, *Raggle-Taggle: Adventures with a Fiddle in Hungary and Roumania* (London: Murray, 1933), by Walter Starkie, an Anglo-Irish scholar who had himself crossed the province.

It would take Leigh Fermor decades to regain contact with the real "István" and "Angéla." In 1965, the prestigious review *Holiday* commissioned Leigh Fermor to recount a journey down the Danube, passing through many of the places that would later be evoked in his travel trilogy. Leigh Fermor's papers, now held in the National Library of Scotland, reveal that he deleted from the published version overtly political observations that could have compromised aristocratic friends now living under the communist regimes. Thus he deleted the observation that in Budapest, "growing signs of liberalization are detectable." Deleted too was an encounter with a "handsome bus conductress" whose trousers and beret gave a "dashing look": "She was a Rumanian from one of the bilingual villages of Transylvania, where she had been a schoolmistress . . . She sat down for a chat. What was it like in Rumania? Awful, she said, blowing out a puff of smoke. She had left a couple of years ago and settled in Pest, where things were far easier; better a conductress here than a schoolmistress there." Also deleted is an observation which emphasizes the experience of spatial and temporal disjunction at work in Leigh Fermor's oeuvre: "There is something suspect in the declaration of fondness for the aristocrats and the peasants of a foreign country; but this one is free of any damaging corollary; in those remote dales and woods, there was no-one else. . . . I felt half trespasser and half spectre."[7] During this journey, Leigh Fermor was unable to retrace his "Triple Fugue" companions, although he was re-united with another aristocratic ex-lover, Princess Balasha Cantacuzino, who returned to him the "Green Diary"—notes on the Slovakian, Hungarian and Romanian stages of his "Great Trudge"—which he had left in haste on her estate at the outbreak of the Second World War. This diary would

offer precious help in reconstructing—and, as we have already seen, reinventing—his youthful journey. However, it bears no trace of his journey between Esztergom and the Bulgarian-Romanian frontier.

"István"

IT WAS in the early 1970s that Leigh Fermor, by now a renowned travel-writer (notably on Greece, where he had settled), began work on his account of the Great Trudge. This return to the past motivated attempts to find survivors of that period. In 1974, Leigh Fermor finally made epistolary contact with "István." Elemér von Klobusziczky had shared the postwar fate of the nobility in Hungary and Romania. He had moved to Budapest during the war after becoming briefly married to a countess successful in haute couture. Once declared a "class enemy" by the new communist authorities, he worked as a technical advisor in stone quarries before making an unsuccessful attempt to flee the country in 1956. He then eked out an existence as a go-between for the sale of the remaining trinkets of his fellow aristocrats. When Leigh Fermor finally caught up with him, he was working as a translator of scientific documents.

There is no indication in Patrick Leigh Fermor's papers of how he found the address of Elemér/István. But the first letter from him in the archives, dated 22 April 1974, expressed deep and lasting attachment to the brief companion he had left forty years before:

> *My dear old friend!*
>
> *It was a very nice day for me when I got your letter. For some weeks I waited and waited for your letter. Then I thought you have not the intention to be in contact with me and this hurt me. Then I began to be anxious perhaps something happened to you. . . . I think and thought very often of the nice days we spent together. But (specially for me) all the nice things are now in the dustbin of the past. I must and must see you!*[8]

He suggested that the simplest way would be for Leigh Fermor to come to Budapest with his wife. The other alternative would be Brittany, where he was planning a family holiday.

In the following letter, Elemér provided information for Leigh Fermor as he prepared *Between the Woods and the Water*: "Storks arrive about the end of March . . . The swallows are coming around 8 April and fly away only around 8 September . . . The hay is cut depending upon the climate . . . Hungarian newspapers have all new names." He also explained the first line of a Hungarian song

he had mentioned. Elemér asked Leigh Fermor to pass a message to the latter's friend Antonia Fraser, biographer and historian: "If you meet her please tell her that you have an old friend an old Hungarian ass who reads her books with delight." For Elemér, who evidently followed life in Britain as well as he could, the death of another literary friend of Fermor, Nancy Mitford, was "a great loss." Elemér's rather reactionary opinions and prejudices also came through. "Was Somerset Maugham (one of my preferred English authors) a Jew?," he asked. A few years before, Elemér had obtained a copy of *My Silent War*, the memoir of the Cambridge spy and Soviet traitor Kim Philby. Inevitably, this Hungarian nobleman was disturbed by what he read: "I couldn't finish it. I was so disgusted. I was convinced the English Intelligence Service is the best in the world. How could something like this happen? How could an officer the son of an Indian Officer work against the Queen and country? And instead to be hanged [sic] he escaped." He was also concerned by the Troubles in Northern Ireland and, in particular, the terrorism of the Irish Republican Army (IRA). He proposed a ruthless solution: "Why doesn't England suppress it with a considerable force and with the most cruel and relentless means? For measure is nothing for terrorists. They must be crushed and annihilated to the last man."

But he added in this missive that he was happy to find some aristocratic company in Budapest: "Lives here the wife of Almássy János born Eva Teleki. She who was one of the beautiful girls I ever see, is now around 80. I see her nearly every week." He was also keen to arrange a meeting with Leigh Fermor that summer and again indicated the freedom of movement then enjoyed by Hungarians with hard currency: "Why wrote you me that it is difficult to visit Greece? A lot of Hungarians are visiting Greece without any difficulties. They travel as tourist and nothing happens to them."[9]

However, Leigh Fermor had left for Greece by the time Elemér arrived in Brittany with his sister Ilona, who still lived in Transylvania, and his estranged stepson Miklós, now settled in Germany, who was "a good looking charming boy but apparently an idiot."[10] Despite missing his long-lost friend, "it was wonderful to see only peasants, fishermen, cows and pigs and not that terrible crowd of tourists." After Brittany, the family visited Paris, Marseille, Nice, Monte Carlo, Florence, Venice, and Vienna, where they met the Countess Ilona Teleki. That said, his conclusion was more somber: "Now I work night and day to cover in some way my debts I made for this trip but my prospects in this respect are not well rosy."[11]

There was no letter from Leigh Fermor for another five months, which plunged Elemér into anxiety: "I thought awful things about you. You crawled around on the Taygetus [mountain range] slipped into a cleft and vultures circled above your body and eat you and the remainder was carried away by foxes and

stray dogs; or you were in Cyprus, at the Turkish-Greek boundary." He then praised his friend's travel-writing: "The first of your books I read was *The Violins of St. Jacques*. Excellent. . . . I see in your books not only the landscape but also the life there their history and nearly everything." But he also corrected him on anthropological observations: "You mentioned in your *Mani* that in the eastern part of Europe the virginity is highly estimated. Perhaps you are correct but not in the case of Transylvania and Transylvania was and is also an eastern country. In this matter I am competent believe me. Poor girls from different villages went often in a brothel to make a bit money and as they had more opportunity to get a husband." He then turned to the political situation. Cyprus was "the hotspot," but not the only place in trouble: "Poor England what a shame that they are discussing the financial situation of their own Queen! The East consolidates and the West decomposes. My son is now in Germany and Caroline my daughter in law wrote me that the circumstances in Germany are much better than in France. And she is a French girl whose father was killed in the most cruel way by the Germans." The situation in communist Hungary was "not too bad. Surely we feel a bit the inflation but it is only a trifle compared with the Western States. The public security is at a very high level." But personally for Elemér, it was "not easy."[12] The 76-year-old had just lost his translation job after his director had a heart attack and now had to work at least 8–12 hours a day to make ends meet. Fortunately, he had a lot of translations from the Hungarian Cable Works.

Such everyday difficulties paled into insignificance next to developments across the Romanian frontier. In July 1975, he informed Leigh Fermor: "I was for some days in Transylvania. The situation there is awful. This crazy maniac clown Ceausescu, the leader for life time, is hated not only by the Hungarians but by 80% of the Rumanians. My sister is fine and well, but she gets even to thinking only every two years a passport (Hungary is considered as a 'Western State,' by the way)."[13]

He continued to be a source of advice, answering questions on Hungarian language and spelling. Leigh Fermor was now turning his attention to the Transylvanian stage of *Between the Woods and the Water*, for in November 1975, Elemér wrote: "You ask me what name I would like in your book. Perhaps Gezu or Tibor though the most adequate would be István because I was born on 20 August the Saint Stephen day, the day of our first King." Also in this letter, he expressed views on law and order and human rights that were scarcely in the spirit of the Helsinki Agreement signed that year: "We are living in a revolting time . . . Here a young scoundrel some months ago hit a policeman over the head (he nearly died but now he is recovered) the boy was caught and these days sentenced to death. He will be hanged and everybody is satisfied. *Humanisme*, *liberalisme* are very nice words . . . but not to keep order in a country."[14]

In 1976, conditions were deteriorating on both sides of the Hungarian-Romanian frontier. In August, he wrote: "Tomorrow morning I make a trip for some days to visit my sister in Transylvania. I knew that there was almost nothing to eat but now she asked even for coffee and tea. The situation there is abominable. Returning from Transylvania I will travel to my son in Dusseldorf." He was also at the mercy of the economic vagaries of "goulash communism": "I have financial troubles because the Company whose articles I translated made an administrative rearrangement and I didn't get translations for 2 months. This was a disaster because I have neither an uncle in America nor somebody else will send me a few dollars if necessary. I am completely indebted. For this moment I don't know how to make out from this situation."[15]

Indeed, in Elemér's letters, there is a sense of mortality and a desperate desire to meet his old friend again. In September 1977, he wrote: "Time is passing quickly. I am old and begin to be sometimes tired without a serious reason. So I wish to see you at least once again. I am in January in Dusseldorf to visit my son and perhaps in May or June again in West Germany. The decision is in your hands. . . . Why don't you come for some days to Budapest?" He also returned to the Romanian situation, where the Ceauşescu regime was pursuing an increasingly assimilationist policy towards the Magyar minority, while meeting its first serious resistance, from miners of the Jiu Valley: "The situation in Transylvania is terrible for all the poor Hungarians living there. But this is not a topic for a letter. Roumanians leader this Ceaucescu [sic] is megalomaniac, a political and diplomatical [sic] clown, hated even by his own people, the Roumanian."[16] The following year, he bluntly gives information that shows how much the world of past acquaintances is a lost one: "Keper W—died; Denise—died; Szigi—died."[17]

But it was in 1978 that Leigh Fermor finally met "István" in his flat in a prosperous area of Buda then populated by communist functionaries. He recalled this encounter with typical horror at *déclassement*: "I found him at last in a workman's flat in Budapest, grinding away at the translation of engineering manuals from English to Magyar."[18] It is after this visit that Elemér's correspondence with Leigh Fermor seems to fall foul of the communist authorities. His previous comments on politics, and especially Ceauşescu's Transylvania, had not attracted their attention—unsurprising, given the rapidly deteriorating relations between the Hungarian and Romanian "comrades." However, in August 1978, he requested Leigh Fermor's help in investigating the Greek husband of Nadia, the sister of Miklós's mother-in-law: "She is in the grip of this Greek who tries to suck the last penny out of Nadia. . . . Please make some inquiry who was his father, who was his mother and who was he, what he made before he married Nadia. I consider him to be a scoundrel!"[19] Five months later, Elemér informed him: "Somebody is very interested in our correspondence because I wrote you 3 letters. One when we came back from Germany together with Ilona. One letter

on asking you something and one before Xmas wishing you merry Xmas and a happy New Year! This [sic] interceptions don't please me and why? I never write such thing that could be of interest for others!"[20] His request for help in a potential criminal case abroad could have been considered unacceptable to the Hungarian authorities, which may explain the letters' interception. On the other hand, as Michael O'Sullivan points out, if the Hungarian security services had files on Elemér and Xénia (which was natural, given their status as "class enemy"), there is surprisingly no archival evidence of surveillance of Fermor, including his correspondence. More astonishingly, Alan Ogden, another of Fermor's biographers, could find no file on him in the Securitate archives.[21]

Ageing Elemér continued to follow a world in turmoil. Revolutionary Iran was "an incredible mess." In Spain, "there are also Troubles just enough and I pity the young King very much just as your Queen with all the strikes. On one side the Basca on the other the IRA in addition." He exclaimed: "As I wrote you many times you are the last spot of my youth and I am now in my 80 years!"[22] In September 1979, he wrote: "Everybody here in Budapest and in the whole country was horrified about the death of Lord Mountbatten [former Viceroy of India and cousin of Queen Elizabeth II]. There are no means to stop the IRA? I would extinct [sic] them with the most cruel means. There is no pardon for a terrorist." But his thoughts returned to *Between the Woods and the Water*: "Please write me about your book you are writing on your travelling through Transylvania. I am all agog to read it. When will you finish it?"[23]

Indeed, Elemér continued to offer information and advice on Hungarian words and the whereabouts of aristocratic acquaintances. The Wenckheims, whom Fermor had stayed with on the Great Hungarian Plain, were "no more now in Hungary. Józsi died, his wife (Teleki) committed suicide or tumbled down near Vienna completely drunk"[24]; "My friend B… [indecipherable] is dead. His wife one of the most beautiful women but also the most stupid I met worked one or two years ago in the women's WC."[25]

Through his sister Ilona in Satu Mare (Szatmárnémeti, Sathmar), Elemér was acutely aware of the increasingly dire situation across the border. In June 1980, he wrote: "The circumstances in Transylvania are terrible. No WC paper, no paper handkerchief not even matches. People are asking fire for cigarettes from each other on the street. No meat, nothing to eat only vegetables. I can't imagine why all this *misère* in such a rich country, who has everything."[26] In 1982, the year when the Ceauşescu regime began the forced march towards repayment of the foreign debt, he told Leigh Fermor that Ilona was "living under terrible circumstances concerning the food and prices. My son is scared to death about the political situation."[27] A year later, he reported: "About Roumania I could write the most awful things. That Ceauşescu their leader is a megalomaniac, his close environment stealing what they can and the population is starving. But

you know these things. Ilona is an angel the best soul in the world and awaits her passport for Germany and France where we will meet with Caroline."[28]

Elemér's own material situation was deteriorating. Leigh Fermor saw him again in Budapest in May 1982 and took him out for lunch. He was now living in what O'Sullivan describes as "a soulless Soviet-style tenement in Centenarium, east of Pest."[29] During that month, Leigh Fermor made a tour of Transylvania and visited the former homes of "Angéla" and "István." He wrote to his friend Deborah Devonshire that these Palladian "Bridesheads" (a reference to *Brideshead Revisited*, Evelyn Waugh's elegiac novel about an English aristocracy swept away by the Second World War) were "nearly all loony bins now, with wild-eyed figures mopping and mowing among the tree trunks and up and down the balustrade steps. One of these had been the setting of a short romance and I felt very queer."[30] As for Istvan's former home, it was now an experimental bamboo plantation. The locals were thrilled to learn that Leigh Fermor had known him and said: "Have some baratzk made out of Mr Elemer's plums. Please give him our respects. We feel guilty living in a stolen house, but it's not our fault."[31] "Unlike Hungary," Leigh Fermor wrote to Devonshire, "the repression in Rumania is fiendish. I gave lifts to dozens of workmen and peasants. *All* complained bitterly *if they were alone* but sickly in praise if there were more than one."[32]

Leigh Fermor was obviously concerned about his old friend's predicament. In July 1982, the latter wrote: "It was truly very kind from your side to ask me what I want. Nothing, because with clothes, shoes, shirts and so on I am not short—only with this damned money always. Is in England not some sort of a Welfare Institution. To help old idiots?" It was above all the Englishman's company he craved: "Come to Budapest," he added.[33] But three months later, he wrote: "For me the times are turning from bad to worse. The translations with this new economically [sic] program become scarce and the prices are rising from week to week, and the translations are since 10 years fixed on the same level. . . . I hope I will get over these times."[34] His prospects for 1983 were not at all happy: "Since two months ceased the translations and this means a catastrophe for me (financially). I try everywhere to get something but in vain. I don't know how to solve this situation with my little pension." The 84 year old hoped to see Fermor again, and ended on the most important question: "Is your book about your Transylvanian Travels not finished?"[35] Elemér continued to help Fermor with his research, answering questions on reaping, threshing, winnowing, sabers, drinking, and musical instruments. In the last letter held in the Patrick Leigh Fermor Papers, dated 31 January 1984, he offered advice on trains to Budapest from Deva, the route Xenia/Angéla had taken at the end of the Triple Fugue. The letter ended: "Your book about travels in Transylvania is not yet ready? I am awaiting it!"[36]

However, Elemér/István would not live long or well enough to enjoy his portrait in *Between the Woods and the Water*. In October 1985, Fermor returned to Budapest armed with the manuscript. He wished to go over it with Rudi Fischer, whose 400 letters had played a key role in its preparation. But he also wanted to show it to his old friend. Unfortunately, he could not find him in the flat in Centenarium. However, he received a phone call from a "rather pretty girl, head of the communist cell for Elemér's former block, who, in spite of Elemér's 85-year-old ultra reactionary stance, had rather a crush on him."[37] She informed him that, following an accident, he was now in a military hospital west of Buda. After further searching, Leigh Fermor then discovered he had been moved to an old people's home in Pest. However, when he woke his old friend, "he looked very drawn, top teeth out, white stubble, but still recognisably good-looking, aquiline, and pink cheeked. The sad thing was he couldn't recognise *me*! When I said 'I'm on my way to Greece' he said, again and again, 'In Greece lives my old friend Leigh Fermor. Greet him from me.' (We've been in constant touch, till three months ago.) 'But, Elemér, it's *me*!' 'No, no, you are too young. Give him my love.'"[38] Leigh Fermor had to tear away at last, "as I felt I was tiring him. I buggered off, feeling very wrung by it all. Eclipse of a Honvéd hussar! I've a terrible fear he won't emerge, or last very long."[39] Indeed, he died four months later, before Leigh Fermor's book was published to great acclaim.

"Angéla"

There was no reunion of the protagonists of the "Triple Fugue." In April 1982, Elemér wrote to Leigh Fermor: "The Csernovits family from Zam are all of them dead besides Xénia who is living here in Budapest. I never see her."[40] In June 1987, Xénia wrote to Leigh Fermor: "I don't know what Elemér's make. I heard that he was half blind."[41] It was testament to how far these fallen Transylvanian aristocrats had drifted apart that, in August 1987, more than a year after the death of "István," Xénia/Angéla wrote to Leigh Fermor: "Elemér Klobosiczky is dead. I hear it for the first time . . . He has a son Miklós. . . . They have two daughters. Elemér was very sorry about this. He envied me for my two grandsons."[42]

Xénia Csernovits had led a turbulent existence since her "affair" with Patrick Leigh Fermor. Five years afterwards, she left her husband and daughter and settled in Buda with her brother. Her life was further altered by the imposition of communism in Hungary. As a "class enemy," she was evicted from her home and sent to work in rice fields on the Northern Great Plain. Later, she found work in a textile factory in Budapest. In 1970, Xénia unintentionally made the

national newspapers by, in a blazing row, accidentally killing her tyrannical landlady. For this, she served two years imprisonment.

This drama is not mentioned in the brief correspondence between her and Leigh Fermor, which, though often undated, probably begins in 1987, after the death of Elemér and the publication of *Between the Woods and the Water*. In what appears to be their first epistolary contact (they will never meet again), Xénia expressed, in a mixture of imperfect French and English, her dismay at Fermor's mention of his 1982 trip back to where they had first met, addressing him as "Michael," which was the name he used when they first met: "You where in *Roumanie*! You can't resiste to go to places who danger is, Michael! Michael you are happy married. Don't go to dangerous places. I am not well in my heart. The weather in this year bad for me. Write me about *Roumanie*. The radio today spoke that the situation is better." She filled him in on her family: Maria her daughter, Countess Teleki, was now a widow, living in Germany, where her sons worked as a computing lecturer and a banker respectively. Like Elemér, she began a litany of aristocratic disappearances: "Geno Teleki died. Became an alcoholist. First he was in Zam. After Zam another Hospital take him. Where he died." Xénia referred to Zam as a lost paradise: "Yes Zam was my only home. Their I was happy. After the death of my father I came away." First to Deva then to a "castel" that "was a great baron castel. I was not happy their. The mother of my husband hated me. Before her death she wrote me: I was rough with you. Pardon me when you cannot pardon forget me. This was my life. *Ecrismoi* about your visit in *Transilvanie*. *Je t'embrasse de tout Cœur*."[43] Leigh Fermor twice writes XENIA in black capital letters over this highly emotional page, and twice in pencil in a margin. But there is no mention of any love affair between the two in this correspondence—nor is it denied by her. Nor does she correct the author on factual errors. Instead, during their brief correspondence, Xénia expresses happiness that he is married but sadness that he has no children. She sends him photographs of the house in Zam, of her young self posing in front of a mirror, and of her older, white-haired self with one of her beloved dogs.

However, Fermor's books and long letters were a source of delight. In *Between the Woods and the Water*, she was "very happy to read the life of chateaux. Margit Teleki, the aunt of my son in law, was enchanted from it." This compensated for her present life. She had lost sight in one eye, had a bad heart and tried to find comfort in simple pleasures: "26 years I was in this Textil Industrie. So I had a passion. Every day I am going to eat in a little restaurant near me." She concluded: "My black hair is now white. I am 78 years old. I am homesick. I had Budapest .Your book brought me home. *Je t'embrasse*."[44]

In July 1987, Xénia thanked him for "the beautiful flowers and champagne." But there remained nostalgia. She wrote: "Yes that was a wonderful time. People who lived in the neighborhood are dead. . . . Kápolnás is now a school for

boys." The vestiges of a happy past were further threatened by Ceauşescu's systematization of the countryside: "Terrible things are in Transilvanie. Ceucescu distroid Castles and Palais. . . . I have not great illusions. Because he is fool . . . Now he destroi near Zam woods and homes. And nobody help! The Germans said Gorbaciov should arrange this situation. I fear this thing will end in a world war!!! For me the Third!" Communist Hungary itself was not immune to the crisis gripping the bloc in its final years: "Here people are afraid. We had a great inflation." Trapped in her flat, with only the memory of Zam and of her pet dogs, a visitation to her balcony offered some respite from loneliness: "I have a pigeon he came to me. Children tortured him. He could not fly 2 weeks. Every morning he fly out and come five in the afternoon back. Children are cruel." This story of the rescued pigeon is repeated three times in her letters, indicating both the importance of her *colombe* and her declining faculties. There was also the consolation offered by literature and the prospect of the next volume of Leigh Fermor's trilogy: "I read many books that are my only joy. Write me when you have time and be happy. I wait for your book. *Je t'embrasse*."[45]

Indeed, like Elemér, Xénia was impatient to read the next installment of Leigh Fermor's memoirs. She wrote: "You must translate this second book in Hungarian. Most who lived [left] Transilvanie for ever would be happy to read it."[46] She was also happy with the unexpected attention she received as a character in the "Triple Fugue": "I got letters about your books. Many had recognise me in Angéla. Happy years where in Zam."[47] In February 1988, during a hard winter, she was delighted to receive a letter with a photograph of Leigh Fermor: "You had never change from time you where a young boy like me grand son… The difference that you are a great *écrivain*. . . . I was just finishing your wonderful book *A Time of Gifts*. For the third time." However, thoughts turned to the increasingly desperate situation across the frontier, and in the world as a whole: "In Transylvania life is terrible. No food, no *chauffage*, and electricity. You was in England and you had very much trouble. *Hélas* the whole world is in trouble…. *Il n'y a plus déluge*! People will destroy themselves. I am old but what will be with the next generation?" Her daughter Maria was now in Munster, and the whole Teleki family in Germany. She concluded: "This life is for ever finish. No *chateaux* no happy life. . . . You are not only *ecrivain* but also historian. When I am homesick after Transylvania I take your book in my hand. Be happy and write your books. *Je t'embrasse*."[48]

Xénia informed Fermor of the increasing numbers of Transylvanian Hungarians crossing the Romanian frontier: "You have herd what a sorry life is now in Transilvanie? Thousands of people came to Hungary they suffered from cold and hunger. No electricity only candlelight"[49]; "every body leave Transilvania. Maria was lucky that she lived [left] two years ago Kolosvar. Now people came without their *meubilier*. Terrible is what the Ceausescu make."[50] In her last letter,

written in June 1988, she writes: "I am desperate what had happened in Transilvania. We are full of refugies! This Caligula distroy the castels, the churches, the woods! I thank God that Maria and her boys lived Transilvania by time. . . . Every day the situation is worser in Transylvanie: no help. . . . The American Jews pay in dollars to Coucescu [sic] to let them out."

A deep melancholy filled this last letter to "Mike': "The world changed very much. But finish the third volume!! The past will never come back. But many people is in life of the old times. The old times never come back also the past sommers with the song of nightingales. Only in your lovely books!" There remained her feathered companion: "I have a little *Colombe*. She can't fly. I hope she will be better. For hours she is out. But she came back, to me." There were other simple pleasures: "I thank God I have my little shop room. And many food books. I eat in a restaurant who is near to me." She concluded with other repetitions: "The Telekis all lived Transilvania. All found jobs. Please send me books of you."[51] However, Xénia Csernovits died soon afterwards, in 1991, on the eve of her 82nd birthday. She therefore did not live to see the launch, in 2001, of the Hungarian translation of *Between the Woods and the Water*, in the presence of the author. Leigh Fermor himself did not live to see the publication of *The Broken Road*, third installment of the Great Trudge, edited by Colin Thubron and Artemis Cooper.

Conclusion

In 2011, the young writer Nick Hunt followed his idol Leigh Fermor's footsteps, a journey across post-communist Europe which he recounted in *Walking the Woods and the Water*. On his way, Hunt visited places haunted by the happy protagonists of a "Triple Fugue" which had not yet been unmasked as a virtuoso piece of autofiction. The Teleki kastély at Kápolnás was, like Xénia's Zam, still the psychiatric hospital Leigh Fermor had observed with melancholia in 1982, its current inhabitants "still in recovery from history, refugees from the modern world."[52] As for the house of Elemér/ István, the final stop on Hunt's "tour of ruination," it was now abandoned: "Nothing stirred inside but dust. The rooms were empty apart from piles of musty agricultural pamphlets. In lieu of the 'fine portrait of an ambassadorial ancestor,' the centre-fold of a porn magazine was pasted on the wall."[53] Thus Hunt echoes, with less literary talent, what makes for much of the charm of Leigh Fermor's travel-writing: temporal and spatial disjunction, the pining for and partial reconstruction of a lost world, the rich seam of *ubi sunt* to be mined. The epistolary prose of Elemér/István and Xénia/Angéla, far less polished and wrought but shot through with affect, pro-

vides an intimate portal onto the lost world of the Transylvanian aristocracy, the deepening crisis of late communism on both sides of the Hungarian-Romanian frontier, as well as Leigh Fermor's own life and work. Finally, and more universally, it shows the ravages of old age that spare neither noble nor commoner. ❑

Notes

1. Patrick Leigh Fermor, *Between the Woods and the Water: On Foot to Constantinopole from the Hook of Holland: The Middle Danube to the Iron Gates* (London: John Murray, 1986), 83.
2. Ibid., 85.
3. Ibid., 89.
4. Ibid., 90.
5. Ibid., 143.
6. Quoted in Michael O'Sullivan, *Patrick Leigh Fermor: Noble Encounters between Budapest and Transylvania* (Budapest: Central University Press, 2018), 252.
7. National Library of Scotland (NLS): Acc. 13338/208.
8. NLS: Acc. 13338/67, Elemér von Klobusiczky to Patrick Leigh Fermor (PLF), 22 April 1974.
9. Ibid., Elemér to PLF, 24 June 1974.
10. Ibid., Elemér to PLF, 9 August 1974.
11. Ibid., Elemér to PLF, 3 November 1974.
12. Ibid., Elemér to PLF, 24 February 1975.
13. Ibid., Elemér to PLF, 8 July 1975.
14. Ibid., Elemér to PLF, 17 November 1975.
15. Ibid., Elemér to PLF, 16 August 1976.
16. Ibid., Elemér to PLF, 5 September 1977.
17. Ibid., Elemér to PLF, 12 April 1978.
18. Patrick Leigh Fermor, *Words of Mercury*, ed. Artemis Cooper (London: John Murray, 2004), 47.
19. NLS: Acc. 13338/67, Elemér to PLF, 20 August 1978.
20. Ibid., Elemér to PLF, 14 January 1979.
21. See Alan Ogden, *The Vagabond and the Princess: Paddy Leigh Fermor in Romania* (London: Nine Elms Books, 2018).
22. NLS: Acc. 13338/67, Elemér to PLF, 30 January 1979.
23. Ibid., Elemér to PLF, 1 September 1979.
24. Ibid., Elemér to PLF, 19 November 1979.
25. Ibid., Elemér to PLF, 19 September 1981.
26. Ibid., Elemér to PLF, 30 June 1980.
27. Ibid., Elemér to PLF, 6 March 1982.
28. Ibid., Elemér to PLF, 27 June 1983.

29. O'Sullivan, 271.
30. Charlotte Mosley, ed., *In Tearing Haste: Letters between Deborah Devonshire and Patrick Leigh Fermor* (London: John Murray, 2008), 201.
31. Ibid., 202.
32. Ibid.
33. NLS: Acc. 13338/67, Elemér to PLF, 24 July 1982.
34. Ibid., Elemér to PLF, 20 October 1982.
35. Ibid., Elemér to PLF, 13 December 1982.
36. Ibid., Elemér to PLF, 31 January 1984.
37. Mosley, 234.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid., 235.
40. NLS: Acc. 13338/67, Elemér to PLF, 10 April 1982.
41. NLS: Acc. 13338/33, Xénia Csernovits to PLF, 7 June 1987.
42. Ibid., 18 August 1987.
43. Ibid., Xénia to PLF, undated.
44. Ibid., Xénia to PLF, 7 June 1987.
45. Ibid., Xénia to PLF, 29 July 1987.
46. Ibid., Xénia to PLF, 18 August 1987.
47. Ibid., Xénia to PLF, undated.
48. Ibid., Xénia to PLF, 18 February 1988.
49. Ibid., Xénia to PLF, 24 April 1988.
50. Ibid., Xénia to PLF, undated.
51. Ibid., Xénia to PLF, 27 June 1988.
52. Nick Hunt, *Walking the Woods and the Water: In Patrick Leigh Fermor's footsteps from the Hook of Holland to the Golden Horn* (London: Nicholas Brealey, 2014), 193.
53. Ibid., 194.

Abstract

"Triple Fugue" Revisited: Patrick Leigh Fermor, "István" and "Angéla"

"Triple Fugue" is one of the most famous chapters in Patrick Leigh Fermor's classic travel book, *Between the Woods and the Water*. Researched and written in the 1970s and 1980s, more than forty years after his "Great Trudge" across pre-war Europe, this account of a whistle-stop tour of the heart of Transylvania in the company of two Hungarian aristocrats, "István" and "Angéla," has since been revealed to be a virtuoso work of autofiction. In this article, we explore the relationship between Patrick Leigh Fermor and the real characters of this adventure, Elemér von Klobusiczky and Xénia Csernovits, through the study of their correspondence, held in the National Library of Scotland. Their letters offer insights into the fate of this Anglophile and Francophile elite after the Second World War, the crises of late communism in Hungary and Romania, the life and work of Patrick Leigh Fermor, as well as the classless ravages of old age.

Keywords

Sir Patrick Leigh Fermor, Transylvania, aristocracy, communism, travel-writing, correspondence