

Monika PERENYEI\*

## THE GOOD SHEPHERD. ON ENDRE BÁLINT'S LATE PHOTOMONTAGES<sup>1</sup>

*He was turned into a photograph  
Before even turning seven.*

(János Pilinszky: Hommage à B. Brecht, 1974; Ms 5937/17.)

**Abstract:** In this paper I analyse the photomontages of Endre Bálint (1914–1986) in the context of the cultural politics of the Iron Curtain period in Eastern Europe and Hungary. First, the study takes a diachronic, historical approach to photomontage as a creative method that maintained continuity between the avant-garde generations of artists, a way of thinking and a creative process accordingly, cultivated in the circles of persecuted, banned or silenced artists experimenting during the decades from the 1920s to 1970s. Second, by placing Endre Bálint's late photomontages (made after his 1963 return from his “exodus” to Paris) in the context of contemporary artistic phenomena (e.g. Brecht's photobook, Jean-Luc Godard's work, David Hockney's montages or bricoleur punk artists), I argue that, in contrast to the generally held view, they are not the withering signs of renunciation, but rather a way out of renunciation, that is, a solution. “We breathe in fragments,” Bálint wrote, and the pictorial form to fittingly reflect a fragmented way of existence (together with the psychological burdens, shadows of the past, and the social and cultural-political determinations) was the montage-technique that had flourished from the 1920s, and whose Eastern European, distinctively Hungarian variant found its guardian, its good shepherd in Bálint, in his creative practice. Bálint's late photomontages also deserve attention from the point of view of a silent narrative of art history, which does not focus on middle-aged artists' major works, but on the profuse production by the old masters, the masters of sprezzatura, which is characterised by an aesthetic lightness, a kind of aesthetic liberation and swiftness, and the ability to allow memories a free influx into the creative work. One of the conclusions of this study is that Hungarian photomontage, and especially the late work of Endre Bálint, can be instructively read in conjunction with the equally restrained psychoanalytic literature of the period, in which the splitting of Self as a traumatic consequence of shocking events and also a means to survive those events is a key concept. A critically productive artistic construction that is based on fragments can be seen and read as the visual counterpart of a psychological notion of Self-splitting.

**Keywords:** photomontage, collage, cut-outs, aesthetic of montage, psychology of montage, Surrealism, Dada, semiotics and psychoanalysis, montage-editing, photobooks, “experience fragment”, fragments and splitting, late works, Hungarian avant-garde, bricolage, fusion of text and image, dream-language

*Since I am a ‘person’, wrote Endre Bálint (1914–1986) on the occasion of a József Jakovits (1909–1994) exhibition that tested visitors' commitment by elusive opening hours, let me take this personally: it was this very place where, some time ago, three Parisian photomontages of mine got warped by the damp walls, which compels me never ever to touch this exhibition space with a ten-foot pole, no matter how enticing the offer they make, which I hope they won't.*<sup>2</sup>

The location in question is the Lajos Hatvany Museum in the small Hungarian town of Hatvan, where the artist Dóra Maurer (b. 1937) and the art historian László Beke (1944–2022) arranged a remarkable exhibition in 1976 despite any irritating circumstances.<sup>3</sup> The curators of the exhibition entitled *Expozíció – Fotó/művészet* (Exposition – Photo/Art) invited artists, including Bálint, on the basis of their sensitivity to media and lens-based imaging, rising above the question *whether photography is art*, a question deemed a dead end by Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin and László Moholy-Nagy,<sup>4</sup> and subjected to ruthless ridicule by the multitalented artist, poet, film maker and visual educator

\* Monika Perenyei, HUN-REN Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Art History, Hungary; e-mail: perenyei.monika@abtk.hu

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Miklós Erdély (1928–1986).<sup>5</sup> The earlier “Montage” exhibition<sup>6</sup> organized by Miklós Erdély had also had Bálint’s work on display, but “Exposition” is notable because its curators intertwined works of the third wave<sup>7</sup> of Hungarian avant-garde and the avant-garde gestures of the sixties and seventies (Fig. 1). Exposition made the continuity of progressive artistic tradition visible through visual forms of thought, especially montage as a way of seeing and a creative principle.<sup>8</sup> The exhibition catalogue includes a text by the art historian Éva Körner (1919–2004).<sup>9</sup> When this study is read in conjunction with certain images<sup>10</sup> that prove revelatory in the chronological survey, they generate a definite impression, namely that montage is the key term of the dialog between the avant-garde and neo-avantgarde generations.<sup>11</sup> In her brief but substantial study, Körner concludes that photomontage drawing on Eisenstein’s and Kuleshov’s cinematic language was the representative genre of the third wave of the Hungarian avant-garde; its quintessential representatives

being Lajos Kassák (1887–1967) with the avant-garde art periodicals including *Munka* (“Work”), and the socially committed young people circling around them, who chose their aesthetic devices accordingly. In 1928, as a 16-year-old student from the School of Industrial Drawing, young Endre Bálint joined the group gathered around the *Munka* (“Work”) circle, where he drew essential inspiration in terms of artistic vision and attitude. *It must be twenty-eight years now since I first lay my hands on a book by Kassák – Bálint wrote in 1957. The Book of Purity (A Tisztaság könyve, 1926) was the ferment of my youth, from then on, I felt, through Kassák, the thrill of art, the magic interplay of words and images, the circling of mind and soul, the drift of whirling associations with all my sixteen years (...) The expressive form raced past me so fast that I had to confuse it with the rushing emotions of my youth, (...) the intellectual and emotional gusts of Sturm und Drang, which expressed the contents of the age (...) Did I really understand it? (...) my youth resonated with the Kassák orchestra, so I understood. For what could*



Fig. 1. Endre Bálint: *I Have a Mind to Impart that My Mind is in Parts* (Parisian Collage Series), 1958, paper, photomontage, 500 × 650 mm, Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum – Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Jelenkori Gyűjtemény, inv. no. MM 87.198. © Szépművészeti Múzeum – Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, 2024; HUNGART © 2024

understanding mean other than reflection, beyond the formal perception which only the late-years, the passing times could bring, and yet the real radiance of form touched my sensibility; because the Work is identical with Form - and Kassák has still not forgotten that. It was an encounter; an encounter that I can never deny, because then I would have to deny the years of my struggles and jubilation, that is to say, myself and the reality of the spirit that emerged.<sup>12</sup> József Román, a writer and comrade of Bálint's, gives a detailed account – spiced with humour – of the eventful, sometimes conflict-tinged and mischievous, but always respectful relationship between the Kassák Circle and its left-wing opposition including Bálint and his closer friends.<sup>13</sup> Keeping in mind the widely accepted correspondence between the critical leftist political attitude and the use of montage technique,<sup>14</sup> the recognition that gradually takes shape in Éva Körner's view and in her referred text is like a stage cue to which the initiated characters respond and the performance

continues. Miklós Erdély happened to be lauding Bálint's pictures in 1977, in a text entitled Good and Bad Shepherds (alluding to a witty photomontage-title conceived by Bálint: *The Bad Shepherd and the Mourning of Mothers*), when he concluded that the representative album of the genre of photomontage could be compiled from the works of Hungarian artists.<sup>15</sup> Could, as in hypothetically could. What "Exposition" actually makes visible in 1976 is this dramaturgy based on the montage principle, the sophisticated, variable and fertile play of photomontage (Fig. 2).

From the late sixties on, montage was no longer just an object of nostalgia for artists touched by Surrealism and practiced by Dadaists such as Endre Bálint; it was also the *fine care*<sup>16</sup> of new wave film directors. Dadaists frequently and effectively used photomontage, this radical tool of diverting and reinterpreting media images and of liberating the imagination, in order to criticise mainstream culture and to demon-



Fig. 2. Endre Bálint: *Fear of the Knife* (Parisian Collage Series), 1958, paper, photomontage, 500 × 650 mm, Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum – Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Jelenkori Gyűjtemény, inv. no. MM 87.193. © Szépművészeti Múzeum – Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, 2024; HUNGART © 2024

strate their rebellious outsider status. Today's prominent members of the subcultures emerging in the seventies, and artists starting out from a marginal position both recognized these Dadaists as their precursors. *New York is really another world, but you know that Dada came here, which is not another world for you; in fact, you're an old Dadaist – when you're not coughing. Punks are not scarier than German Expressionism, which you know and respect, and Warhol is no colder than a square on a black background, not to mention some Picassos, whom no one supposes to have had any emotions, I hope*, wrote István Bálint, a member of the group Squat Theater, to his father from exile in New York.<sup>17</sup>

Photomontage, which takes a pair of scissors and some glue, and cut-out as an image making technique enriches the psychology of mental images as well: in the 1970s it served as a mental model for studying image flows with no conscious control or only loose control, dreams, reveries, and unconstrained imagination.<sup>18</sup> Psychologist Ferenc Mérei (1909–1986) uses the montage principle to articulate the process of this psychic region of reality, while Miklós Erdély – in the spirit of their mutual respect – explores the nature of the psyche, the working of the subconscious in good photomontages, and this is what he recognizes in Bálint's works characterized by a *swift lightness, elasticity and alertness of panic* (Fig. 3).<sup>19</sup> The Dadaist act of montaging images by breaking up and re-arranging monoperspectival technical images can be recognized in the surrealists' procedures of creating images and

objects by allowing dreams into waking consciousness, despising hypocrisy, and transgressing the boundaries of genre.<sup>20</sup> Photomontage is the visual counterpart of the economy of poetry using *readymade expressions*<sup>21</sup> and the visual equivalent of intertextuality, which weaves together allusive cultural references (Fig. 4). Leaving the world of two-dimensional image surfaces and texts to enter the living world, one can recognize a bold expansion of the montage principle and of collage in the *bricoleur* style of the deviant rebels, the doomed youth of the 1970s, their provocative manner of image creation and performances.<sup>22</sup> The charismatic public personas of David Bowie, Patti Smith, El Kazovsky (1948–2008), and Gergely Molnár (b. 1950), frontman of the cult band Spions ("Spies") produce their effect as living montages. These artists pick details alluding to historical periods and events, ideas or subversive forerunners and heroes out of the vast vaults of culture and the past, creating bricolages with an unerring sense of form, and stage them in a production that derails conventions by rearranging quotations, and creates community with its unsettling references.<sup>23</sup>

When Bálint's photomontages appeared in 1989, three years after his death, it was once again at an exhibition demonstrating the creative potential in using photos. The exhibition *Más-Kép* ("Different View". Experiments in Photography of the Last Twenty Years in Hungary), a monumental venture by art critic Ágnes Gyetvai (1952–1991), who suffered a tragic fate, but in her short life played a significant role in providing vis-

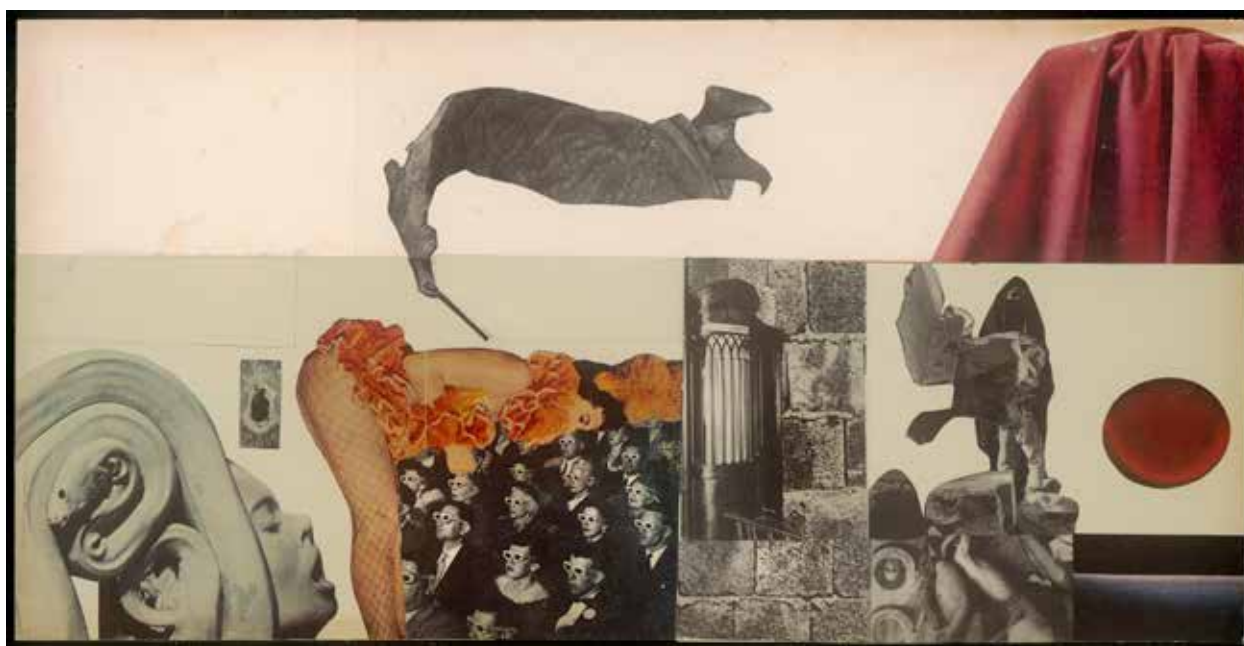


Fig. 3. Endre Bálint: *Untitled*, paper, collage, 299 × 600 mm, Kecskemét, Magyar Fotográfiai Múzeum (Hungarian Museum of Photography), inv. no. 2012.254. HUNGART © 2024



Fig. 4. Endre Bálint: *Az apáca, a szőrfarkas és a bőrfarkas* (The Nun, the Fur Wolf and the Leather Wolf) (Parisian Collage Series), 1958, paper, photomontage, signed, dated and titled, 50 × 65 cm, Budapest, Vintage Galéria. HUNGART © 2024

ibility to underground artists and fostering their practice, displayed works by 123 exhibitors (from photographers through textile artists and painters to stage designers).<sup>24</sup> Although the subtitle promises a survey of the preceding two decades, Bálint's photomontages on display were not made in the seventies. The list of artworks includes five of his photomontages from Paris (1958) and the page *Portrécollázs Kassák Lajos-ról* ("Portrait Collage of Lajos Kassák", 1963) made in Hungary after his six-year *exodus in Paris*,<sup>25</sup> as well as the photomontages on a blue base by József Jakovits (1963), made before his emigration to New York.<sup>26</sup> A reconstruction of the arrangement of the photo works displayed there would be informative: the visual relations created through groupings, sizing and installation, a constellation of divisions and convergences by generation or attitude in 1989. The absence of a professional catalogue and critical feedback prevented the exhibition from making the kind of impact it had potential for due to its curator's approach rising above

the institutional structure and the impressive arrangement one can surmise from the photo documentation.<sup>27</sup> It is significant for our concerns here that there was a shared space filled with a lively atmosphere of "experimentation," in which Endre Bálint's and József Jakovits's works appeared with conceptual and performative photos and performance documentation, as well as with documentaries and montage photojournals by much younger artists (Fig. 5).<sup>28</sup>

*If no miracle happens, I have come to the end of my career. But a miracle can always happen: a new realization can bring you to rise to a new effort even when you think that you no longer have the strength to lift a sheet of paper (...) – Bálint wrote in the beginning of 1977.*<sup>29</sup>

It is well known that Bálint had to give up painting in the mid-1970s, since, to quote him, his asthma could bear the smell of glue better than turpentine. Consequently, the last decade of Bálint's oeuvre is often viewed with a forgiving attention under the label of sad *renunciation* (Fig. 6).<sup>30</sup> However, in this period of



Fig. 5. Endre Bálint: *Dream about the Cemetery* (Parisian Collage Series), 1958, paper, photomontage, 500 × 650 mm, Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum – Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Jelenkori Gyűjtemény, inv. no. MM 87.191. © Szépművészeti Múzeum – Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, 2024; HUNGART © 2024



Fig. 6. Endre Bálint: *XXII*, paper, collage, 300 × 600 mm, Kecskemét, Magyar Fotográfiai Múzeum (Hungarian Museum of Photography), inv. no. 2012.258. HUNGART © 2024

*renunciation*, Bálint channelled his creative energies and exceptional emotional mobility into making hundreds of photomontages and objects, which were frequently exhibited. These works included the image design for the private events of his circle of friends, the so called Tribe (including Ferenc Mérei, mentioned above), sarcastic and ironic Event Drawings, and ephemeral room installations.<sup>31</sup> The occasional private (underground) events of the satirically conceived Tribe usually began with readings, and news of them spread across the network of the participants' friends: those active in the "room theatre" (like István, Endre Bálint's son) also came into this orbit of opposition and *intellectual bootleggers*.<sup>32</sup> Spontaneity, an open form of provoking spectators to participate actively; appropriation; allusive fragments (hypertext); the aggression in drastic cuts (editing); sarcasm – these are characteristics and qualities that were already there in Dadaist photomontage, a technique also applied in punk art, and was one of the inventions used in neo-avantgarde, existed as

a subculture in the repressive political atmosphere of Hungary (Fig. 7). In this context, I propose that Endre Bálint's photomontages from the mid-1970s and later can be viewed as solutions rather than renunciation. *My son, and even my grandchild is in the 'business' of the avant-garde, so to speak*, Bálint wrote. In other words, he was *still* on this path, and young artists were *already* on it.<sup>33</sup> It is hardly a twist of fate that Bálint's increasingly intense shortness of breath – *we breathe in fragments*, as he said<sup>34</sup> – and his giving up of painting coincide with the coerced emigration of the room theatre group of Dohány Street, including his son (István Bálint, quoted above) with his family and circle of friends.<sup>35</sup> If anything, not having his loved ones near could, in fact, contribute to his resignation and the appearance of muted colours of his work – something he was aware of. Bálint would always keep the fragments of the past on the surface, and the emigration of the young people may have evoked memories from his own youth, or rather a kind of re-enactment of the past



Fig. 7. Endre Bálint: *Boldog Bulldog* (Blissful Bulldog), paper, collage, 400 × 500 mm, Kecskemét, Magyar Fotográfiai Múzeum (Hungarian Museum of Photography), inv. no. 2012.263. HUNGART © 2024

events, the fear of persecution, the unpredictability of exclusion and inclusion and the agonizing dilemmas of emigrant existence. Photomontage, as an adequate means of expressing his world of emotions and ideas, was literally close at hand for Bálint, who would keep refining a distinctive aesthetic of montage both in his photomontages and his painting and whose image making would absorb both the density of dreams and the ambiguity of reference (Fig. 8). The montage principle, markedly relevant in photomontage, is a thoroughly mastered method in Bálint's creative process, which he applied with a *sprezzatura*<sup>36</sup> in his late sixties

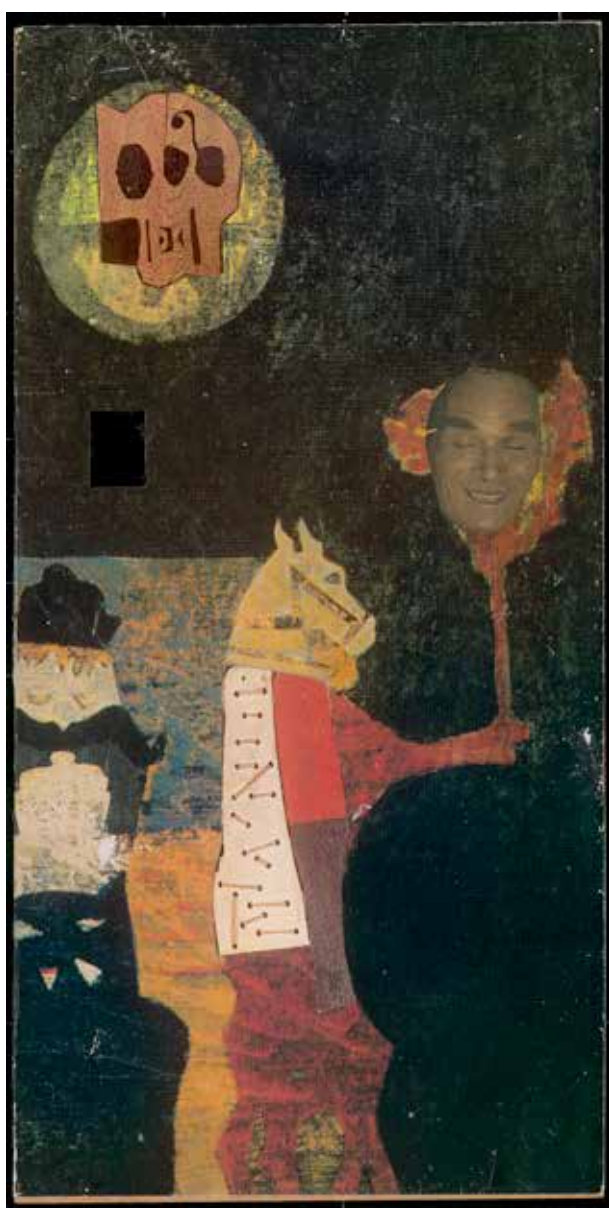


Fig. 8. Endre Bálint: *Untitled*, paper, collage 600 × 300 mm, Kecskemét, Magyar Fotográfiai Múzeum (Hungarian Museum of Photography), inv. no. 2012.260. HUNGART © 2024

and early seventies, also inspired the neo-avantgarde and art punk artists of the young generation.<sup>37</sup>

In the photomontage *The Squat to New York*, Bálint cuts up a photo of the theatre company (that is, of the family) taken at Place des Abesses in Paris in late February, 1976, to rearrange that group of young emigrants. The family members are scattered in an archaic setting split by an enormous fork before a crumpled background, evoking a stone surface bearing Hebrew script and cut to the shape of tombstones (Fig. 9). The cross of Calvary looms above a surface evocative of decaying materials, yet encompassing the motif of a sharp tool as well as the young people's images, with a small yellow planet floating above them. The year Bálint's composition dates from is part of the period when the active phase of the Squat Theatre was beginning to wind down.<sup>38</sup> The late period of montage is not an allegory of Bálint's renunciation. As a simple technique inspiring imagination, photomontage has a capacity to sustain activity and allows a quick formal arrangement of emotional impressions; as a visual form of thought, it has a capacity for subversive and unconventional arrangement of different ideas, memories and sensations.<sup>39</sup> Bálint returns to the sources of his creative method by framing images in ways that admit both the pain of memories brought back by present experiences, and the relief brought by creation, play and ironic humour. For the *hybridity* salvaged from radical surrealism is a sustaining spirit of his frequently paradoxical visual world of montage; diasporic existence with its dual perspectives of belonging and being an outsider is his innermost experience. Accepting hybrid qualities and the ability to change perspective are welcome gifts for the creation of photomontages or other montage-based creative work. *During my years in Paris, I safeguarded my Hungarian identity, and now I have to safeguard what Europe has entrusted to me: the new Form arising from the touch of the flows of truth and liberty.*<sup>40</sup>

Safeguarding the new Form was no easy undertaking, however, despite the network of supportive friends and colleagues and affirmation by the younger generation. Instead of dwelling on the well-known atomization of cultural life, the frustrations caused by official doctrines of cultural policy and the impact of the threat of surveillance, I want to address another challenging obstacle to formal innovators and initiators of fresh cultural formations: rampant manifestations of a world of taste settling into comfort and rejecting external influence and new impulses can dampen or even completely extinguish the live





Fig. 9. Endre Bálint: *The Squat to New York*, paper, collage, 500 × 695 mm, Kecskemét, Magyar Fotográfiai Múzeum (Hungarian Museum of Photography), gyarapodási napló szám (growth log no.) 8/2007. HUNGART © 2024

critical energy that can spark up from time to time. As early as the second half of the 1940's, before the year of the Communist takeover in 1947, Bálint recognizes the right-wing tastes of leftist, socialist youth as a mass symptom, manifested in an attraction to a broad accessibility of meaning and a conservatism without traditions and utter puzzlement by progressive art.<sup>41</sup> Miklós Erdély ridicules – without much cheer – representatives of Hungarian mainstream art who proudly and shamelessly claim during the European renaissance of the avant-garde that the avant-garde has no traditions in Hungary.<sup>42</sup> Erdély's *A Hunger for Montage*, published in 1966, shares the idea of a television series: it is high time work started on developing the language of montage in half-hour programs of the show, since even the directors of feature films that dwindle into mere literary illustrations tend to neglect this composition device favored throughout Europe. Indeed! The idea that remained unacknowledged<sup>43</sup> in the Hungarian environment became quite popular on British television. Terry Gilliam, whose career was launched by the Monthly Python series

and who became a cult figure with his time travels in film, illustrates the tricks of his photomontages and animations in a children's program of the BBC in the mid-seventies. He uses improvised collages from paper cutouts to demonstrate the magic of the *cut-out* technique. The montage procedure, which is limited in its raw material, due to being a technical image, yet has liberating effects due to accessibility and ready-made figural representations, is in the service of creativity: it is fast and inspires boldness, such as the subversion of scale and chronological time – it is *simply sexy*.<sup>44</sup> At the same time, Bálint makes a request to the visitors accidentally wandering into one of his photomontage exhibitions and looking at the images on the wall in bafflement, asking them not to be startled by the unusual character of his montages. He apologizes for abandoning the brush (Louis Aragon and Lajos Kassák spoke up against the dominance of painting conventions as early as the 1920s!) and offers a glimpse into the connections between his montages and the soul (psyche) in which exterior and interior worlds are superimposed.<sup>45</sup> Bálint is still in



Fig. 10. Endre Bálint: XXVI, paper, collage, 300 × 600 mm, Kecskemét, Magyar Fotográfiai Múzeum (Hungarian Museum of Photography), inv. no. 2012.257. HUNGART © 2024

true form: yearning for understanding and exercising a little humility is worth next to nothing without a pinch of irony... (Fig. 10).

Bálint produced photomontages for decades, and there are still pieces that crop up at exhibitions and strike one as new. The latest encounter of this sort hap-

pened at the Vintage Gallery in 2017 (Fig. 11),<sup>46</sup> but the centenary exhibition of the Museum of fine Arts and the Hungarian National Gallery had its surprises as well. Bálint's pictures at the Hungarian Museum of Photography had not been known to the public either.<sup>47</sup> It is hard to have an overview of Bálint's pho-

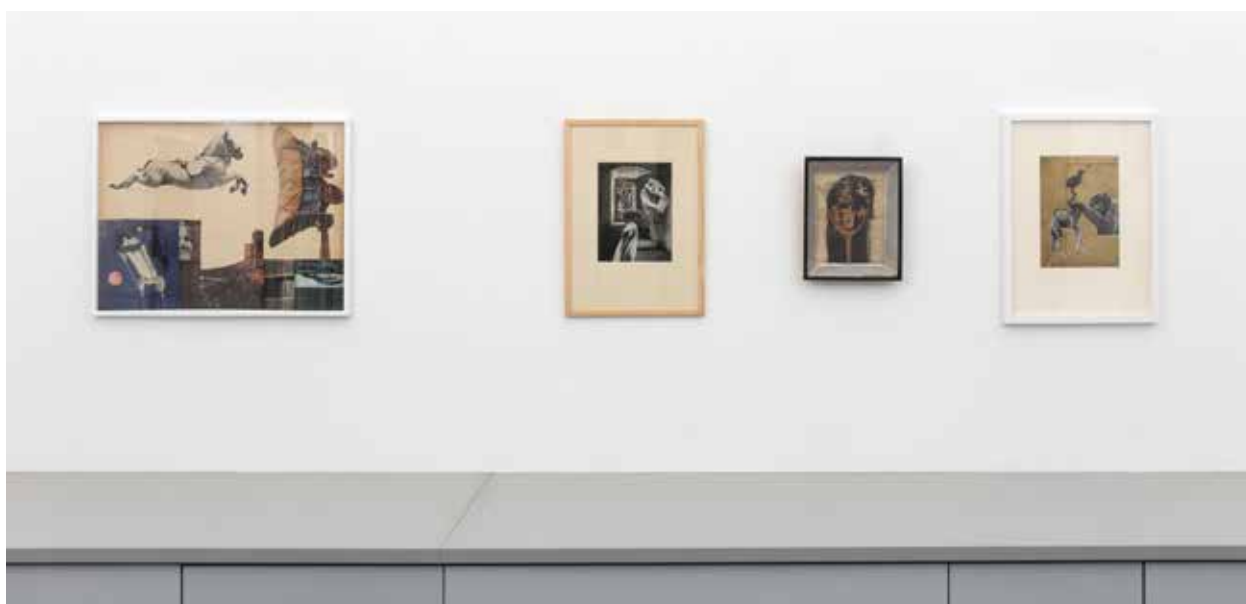


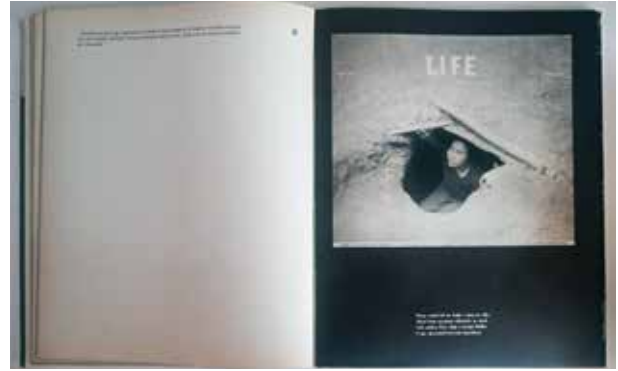
Fig. 11. Exhibition view, *Expozíció – Fotó/Művészet 1976/2017* (Exposition – Photo/Art 1976/2017), Budapest, Vintage Galéria, photo by András Bozsó; the pictures on the wall from left to right: Endre Bálint: *Spionírek* (Spioneers) (Parisian Collage Series), 1959, paper, photomontage, 50 × 65 cm, Budapest, Vintage Galéria; Júlia Vajda: *Vigyor* (Grin), 1958, paper, photomontage, 26.5 × 19.5 cm, Budapest, Erdész Galéria; Lajos Vajda: *Perui Madonna* (Madonna from Peru), 1930–33, paper, photomontage, 24 × 18 cm, Alföldi Gyűjtemény (Collection Alföldi); Lajos Kassák: *Állatkollázs* (Animal collage), 1923 (?), paper, collage, 30 × 22 cm, Budapest, Kassák Múzeum. HUNGART © 2024

tomontages and objects for lack of an oeuvre catalogue that would document photomontage series (including Hand Position [*Kéz-helyzet*], Ancient Virtue [*Ósi erény*], In memoriam Lili Ország, Variations on a Theme [*Változatok egy témára*]) and pictures and objects made with cutout, pasting and bricolage, altered books, and film posters and ads using the potentials of montage.<sup>48</sup> In a judgment that favours painting, Bálint's oeuvre of photomontages will always be a poor relative, perhaps due to their less than noble raw material.<sup>49</sup> The only exception is perhaps the Parisian photomontages (1958–62) (Fig. 12), which achieve a painterly effect with their vibrant colours, their filigree image cutouts “dropping” onto the white base, the explosively inventive, risqué and poetic juxtapositions of image components, and the flexible wriggling silhouettes of forms derived from photographic details. These qualities as well as the punning titles that are organically tied to the images make the Parisian photomontages undeniably unique pieces of Hungarian art history.<sup>50</sup> Yet the

distinctive medial difference of photomontage from painting endow the former with characteristics – even if Bálint interlinks his paintings and montages with recurring motifs, a sort of self-referential intertextuality in his pictorial world – that lead to the morals informing his creative outlook, the politics of his *ars poetica*. Recycling the image production of photo-journalism, advertising and book publishing, creating new connections through cutouts, mutilation, and surprising juxtapositions has a critical potential. It repurposes an image production that operates under the thrall of the myth of photography and is rendered manipulative due to sheer quantity in the case of photojournalism and advertising, and an image production thoroughly permeated by ideology in the case of journal and book publishing.<sup>51</sup> Dada montage is a well-known early example, but Bertolt Brecht's *Kriegsfiabel* (“War Primer”) is also a relevant case. Brecht's photo book of images accompanied by quatrains (photo-epigrams as Brecht called it) was collecting and editing during decades



Fig. 12. Endre Bálint: *Eichman Úr, avagy halottakról jót, vagy -rosszat! / Mister Eichman, or Good or Bad about the Dead!* 1959, Paris montage, signed, dated and titled, 50 × 65 cm, Budapest, Vintage Galéria. HUNGART © 2024



Figs 13–14. Bertolt Brecht: *Kriegsfiibel*, Berlin: Eulenspiegel Verlag, 1955, courtesy of Josef Chladek

mainly his years of exile and published in the German Democratic Republic after he settled there in 1955 (Figs 13–14). Brecht's book of photo-epigrams focusing on the images of wars and terrors also offers its leftist social critique by actually intervening into the visual apparatus of mass culture<sup>52</sup> itself in order to analyse the visual regime and increase awareness of the ideology behind mass culture. Brecht creates a new artifact by cutting up and selecting from the images of publications of vast circulation that are based on the technical reproduction of images (magazines, catalogues). It is interesting to consider the complicated history of publication of *Kriegsfiibel* in the GDR along with the case of Endre Bálint, who belonged to the “oppo” (as in opposition), because the Brechtian photo book, a collection of newspaper and catalogue cutouts accompanied by four-line epigrams, is not only a critique of the fascist ideology of war-machinery<sup>53</sup> along with the capitalist social system and its culture industry. Through its paratextual elements, such as the emphasis on the author, it also critiques the uniformity enforced by state socialism, at least on our retrospective reading today. With Broomberg & Chanarin's re-work of *Kriegsfiibel* (*War Primer 2*, 2011; Fig. 15) the Brechtian collection of photo-epigrams mainly initiates the reader into a

critical analysis of the manipulation of image circulation and consumption by demonstrating the control of the visual repertoire of the propaganda machinery maintaining the level of tension in the cold war, and



Fig. 15. Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin: *War Primer 2*. 2011



Fig. 16. Endre Bálint: *Ancient Virtue Album*, without year, 1970s?, collage based on the album of *Ancient Virtue*.

*Glorious Epochs in the History of Hungarian Nation* (Sándor Lietzenmayer: *St Elisabeth of Hungary*), published in 1896, 33,5 × 24 cm, Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum – Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Jelenkori Gyűjtemény, inv. no. MNB.MML.2017.356.12 (deposit of the Magyar Nemzeti Bank / Hungarian National Bank). © Szépművészeti Múzeum – Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, 2024; HUNGART © 2024

the wars of today.<sup>54</sup> (Fig. 15). Like Brecht, Bálint also messes with the thoroughly ideological apparatus of the reproduction of the technical image, and – though this was only accessible to a close circle during his lifetime – he also poked fun at the operation of journal and book publishing under constant censorship and by extension at the strongly ideological cultural policy of the past and the day. We see this in his transgressive work *Ósi Erény* (“Ancient Virtues”), re-working of a fine art book published in the year (1896), when Hungary celebrated the thousandth anniversary of Hungarian occupation of the Carpathian Basin (Figs 16–19).

Bálint's social critique, which was consistent with the intellectual and cultural milieu sustaining his painting, was much sharper in his photomontages due to the specificity of photographic details and the drastic nature of cuts and juxtapositions. After the quality of the magazines found and used in his years in Paris (1957–62), such as *Paris Match* and *Life*, the meagre images of visually starved Hungarian publica-

tions gave Bálint less room to play. So, partly in order to have enough raw material, he complemented the cutouts and photos of journals and books with a continued program of re-photographing: making photo series using his earlier paintings, photomontages, and favorite objects.<sup>55</sup> Just as the paintings, the photomontages too show a flow of Bálint's characteristic motifs, successively recontextualized: at times, he takes the stencils also used in painting and fills them with fresh photo cutouts, at other times he reuses previously shown photos cut into a different shape or used on a different scale or in a new visual context. Bálint admits the images of memory and imagination into the daytime, distinctively intertwining the images of his mythic interiority and those of the outside world and its implacable constraints and taboos. One can sense the tension between the Communist regime of János Kádár, its peaceful surface based on silencing, and the surrealist, who experiences and therefore allows for the demonic and despises hypocrisy.

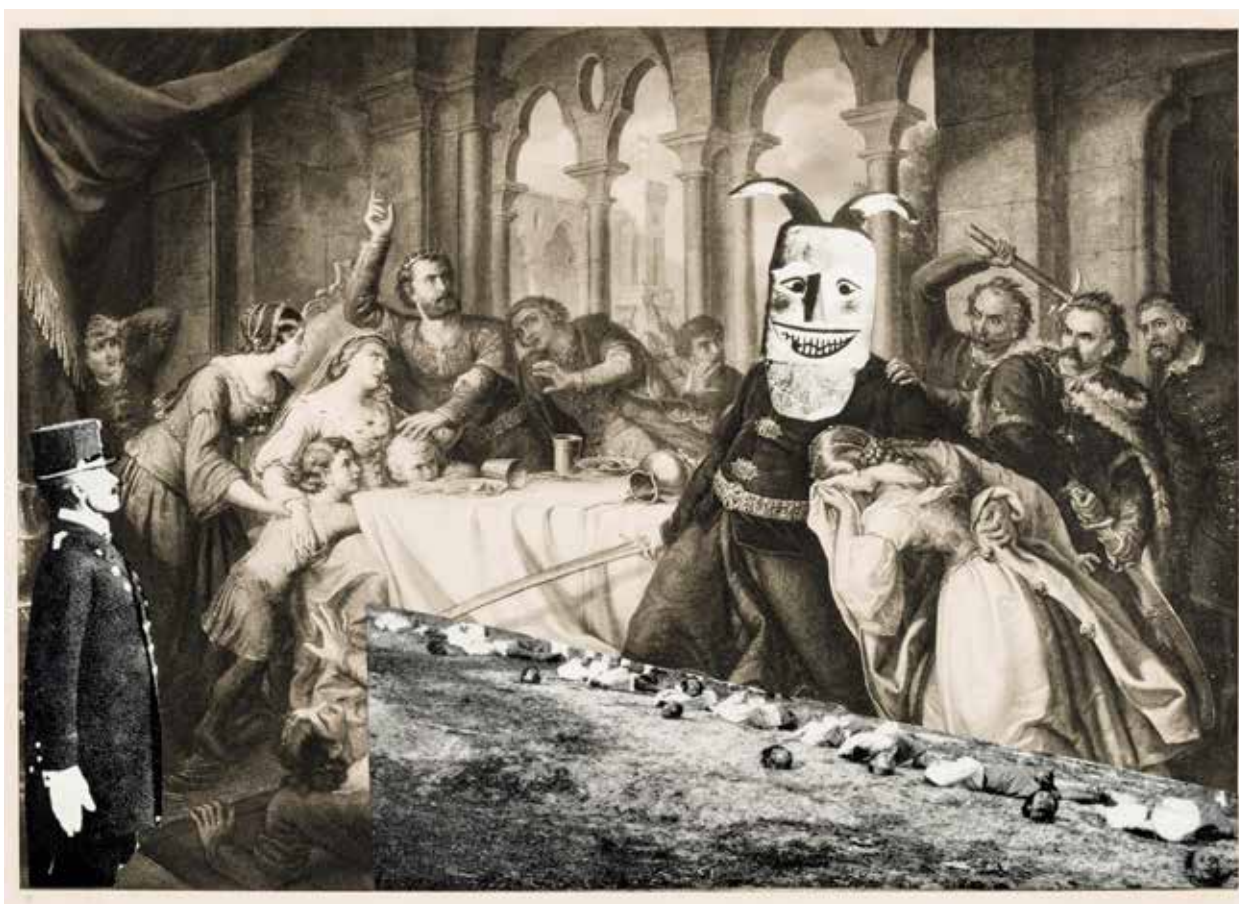


Fig. 17. Endre Bálint: *Ancient Virtue Album*, without year, 1970s?, collage based on the album of *Ancient Virtue. Glorious Epochs in the History of Hungarian Nation* (Soma Orlay-Petrich: *Felician Zach*), published in 1896, 14 × 32,5 cm, Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum – Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Jelenkori Gyűjtemény, inv. no. MNB. MML.2017.356.15 (deposit of the Magyar Nemzeti Bank / Hungarian National Bank). © Szépművészeti Múzeum – Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, 2024; HUNGART © 2024

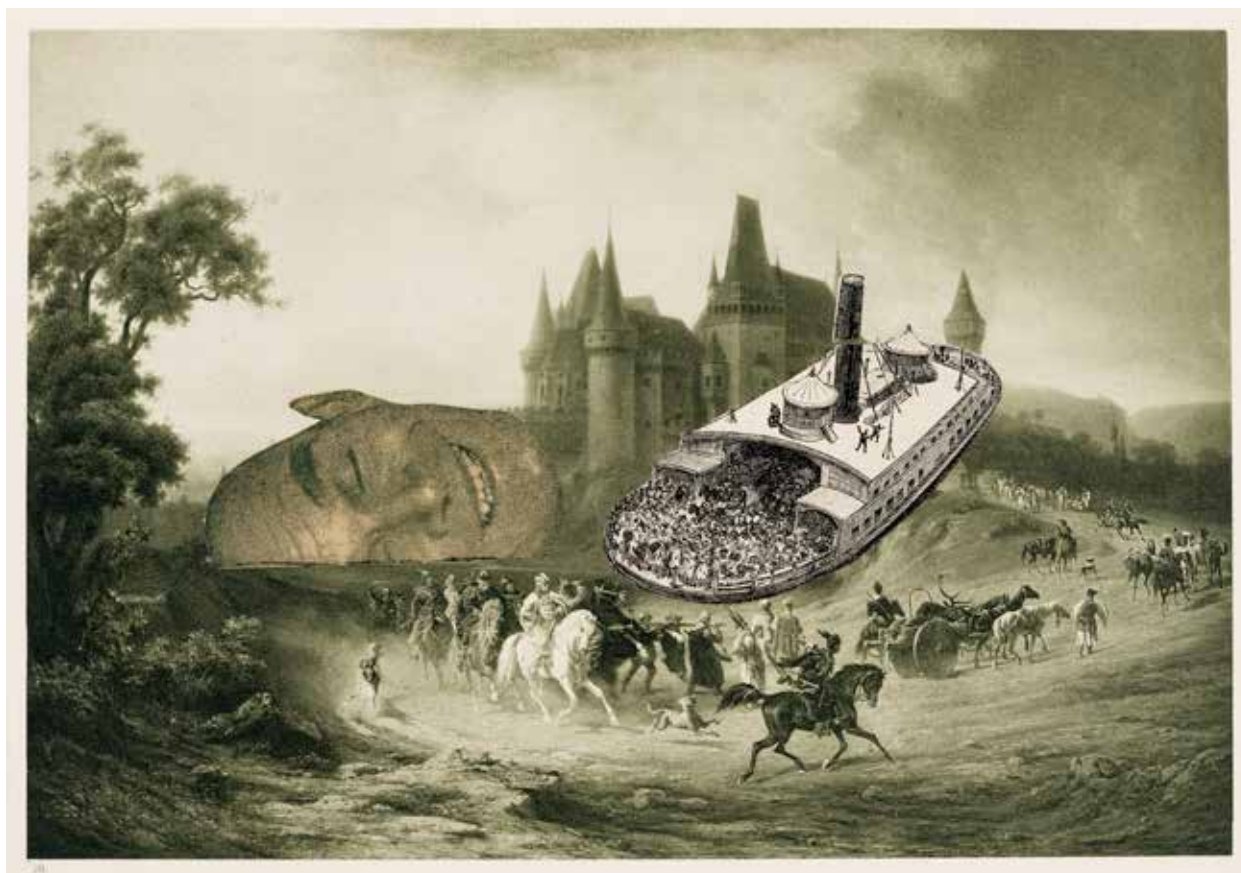


Fig. 18. Endre Bálint: *Ancient Virtue Album*, without year, 1970s?, collage based on the album of *Ancient Virtue. Glorious Epochs in the History of Hungarian Nation* (Antal Ligeti – Sándor Wagner: *King Matthias returns to Hunyad Castle from hunting*), published in 1896, 23,5 × 32,5 cm, Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum – Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Jelenkori Gyűjtemény, inv. no. MNB.MML.2017.356.28 (deposit of the Magyar Nemzeti Bank / Hungarian National Bank). © Szépművészeti Múzeum – Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, 2024; HUNGART © 2024



Fig. 19. Endre Bálint: *Ancient Virtue Album*, without year, 1970s?, collage based on the album of *Ancient Virtue. Glorious Epochs in the History of Hungarian Nation* (Barnabás Holló: *Foundation of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences*), published in 1896, 18 × 32,5 cm Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum – Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Jelenkori Gyűjtemény, inv. no. MNB.MML.2017.356.47 (deposit of the Magyar Nemzeti Bank / Hungarian National Bank). © Szépművészeti Múzeum – Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, 2024; HUNGART © 2024

By constantly displaying and recontextualizing his recurring motifs, Bálint develops an image making procedure that is not simply a subjective narration of his dreams and memories and intersperses them between the image fragments of various publications of vast circulation. In other words, he forges links between his psyche and the external world. Ferenc Mérei, a renowned children's psychologist, proponent of Lacanian psychoanalysis in the Hungarian culture of the 1970s (and, last but not least, Bálint's close friend and a member of his circle called the *Tribe*) interprets the recurring motifs of Bálint's paintings as *experience fragments*. These are not symbols or similarities, but concrete remnants of concrete experiences. The *experience fragments* evoking the emotional mood of the experiences become richer with each return, since each return carries the entirety of the original background of the experience. Each iteration brims with the tension and nostalgia of the previous one. The relationship between signifier and signified is neither fixed, nor directly legible: they can be comprehended on the basis of the unity of experience, shared

by the painter and the viewer.<sup>56</sup> These motifs reference shared experiences that are dramatic and shocking to those who went through them. This allusive language is also at play in the childlike view that lacks symbolic reference, explains Mérei. Bálint has certainly no monopoly on this play of motifs woven from allusions to shared experiences: all artists who want to distance themselves from naturalistic representation, yet wish to remain close to experience, will avoid the theatrical nature of symbolism and prefer indirect, that is allusive representation.<sup>57</sup> This allusive representation, which Bálint refined in his paintings, is intensified in the photomontages of his last decade. By repeating the details of his earlier paintings and photomontages, he conjures up his own oeuvre in a type of flash-back and creating the mood of meditative reminiscence, while also sustaining the community that shares the world view and artistic attitude that underlie his oeuvre and that shared in the artistic events of the preceding decades (Fig. 20).<sup>58</sup>

Under the peaceful surface of the Kádár regime, there were suppressed memories that cut to the bone.

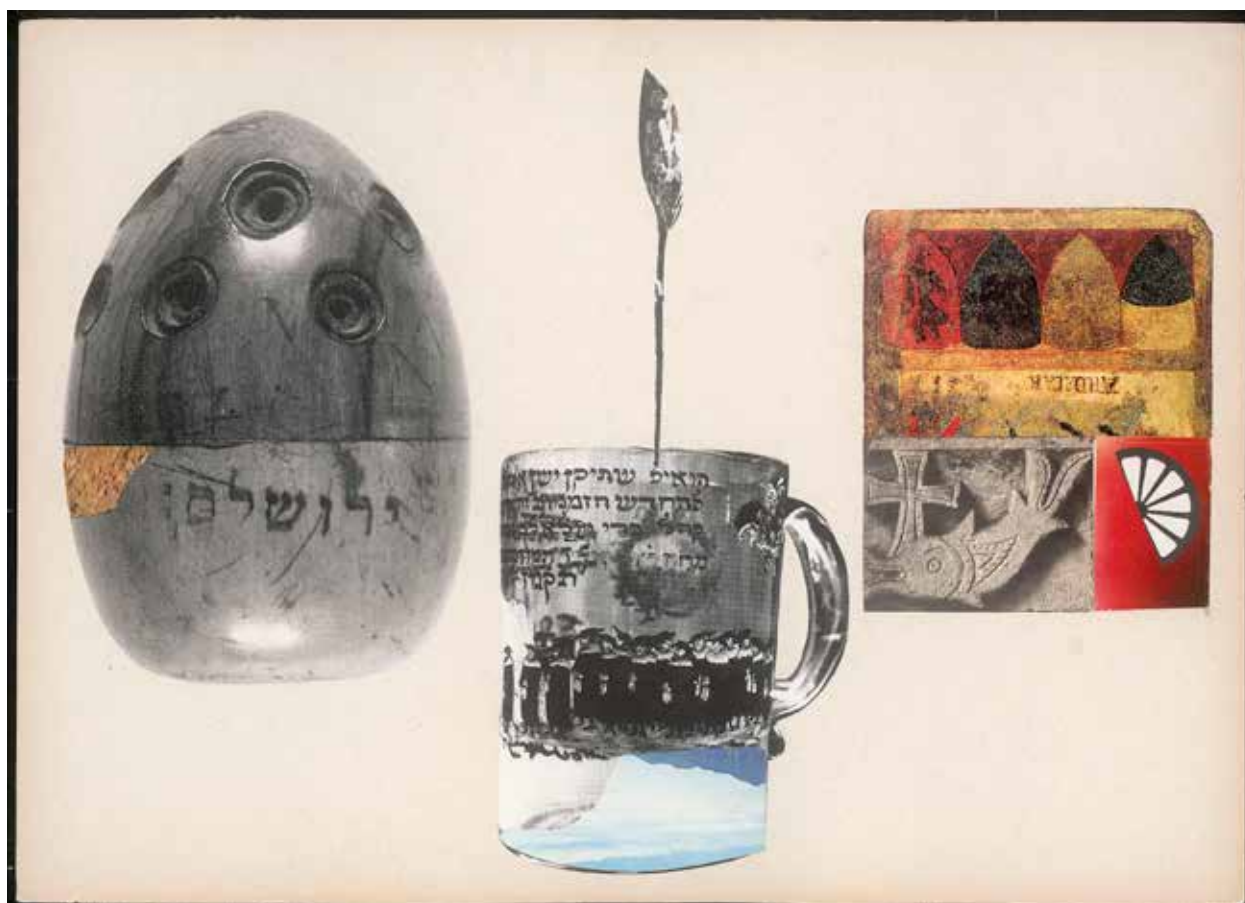


Fig. 20. Endre Bálint: *A Long Day*, 1981, paper, collage 500 × 700 mm, Kecskemét, Magyar Fotográfiai Múzeum (Hungarian Museum of Photography), inv. no. 7/2007. HUNGART © 2024



Figs. 21. Endre Bálint: XCII, paper, collage, 584 × 200 mm, Kecskemét, Magyar Fotográfiai Múzeum (Hungarian Museum of Photography), inv. no. 2012.257. HUNGART © 2024

This art that created community through its allusions brought those memories to the surface. As early as the Parisian period, Bálint's visual world includes recurring motifs that preserve the memory of the Shoah through Bálint's personal fate: Adolf Eichmann's portrait after his capture published in print (*Life* magazine) and ethnic German women living in Hungary who saved lives, as a counterpoint to evil (Figs 11, 21–22).<sup>59</sup> Beginning in the mid-1970s, while light humour and eroticism continue to animate some of his work, a tragic visual world also appears, crushing in its sphere of experience and blocklike in composition, out of toppled statues of angels, Jewish tombstones, ritual objects of Judaism, looming chimneys, gates and fences of concentration camps, coffins, details of skulls and corpses, empty or mismatched head with blank eyes, monstrous faces cradled by lace bonnets, fragments of dogs and wolves. Major shifts of scale between image fragments become more frequent, and so do the counterpoints between close-ups and panoramic images, between details enlarged into significance and landscape fragments fading into infinity. Intertwining words and images, using the text as a visual surface also occur more often. Despite the lack of any direct relationship, photomontages and montage images by R. B. Kitaj and his friend David Hockney also dating from the seventies and eighties, offer an illuminating analogy. There seems to be a comparable creative vision discernible in the paintings composed out of image fragments and textual components and in photomontages bearing the traces of cutting. In the British society that seemed tolerant on the surface, it was Hockney's homoerotic attractions and Kitaj's Jewish origins that they experienced as something exotic that predetermined their roles balancing between insider and outsider positions.<sup>60</sup>

Critics noted Bálint's shift to tragic form following his photomontage exhibition in 1978,<sup>61</sup> something Bálint also comments on in his memoir. *They were perhaps more boldly articulated, more categorically composed. It is as if they lost their sense of humour, their grotesque qualities*, writes Bálint about his photomontages made in 1980. *The quotation of motifs almost unequivocally signals a sense of the closeness of death, and it's as if my emotions were pulsing under the bell jar of silence. But this is not a silence that becomes rigid in a world of the acoustic void and immobility of deadly muteness and paralysis, but rather one that creates space and meanders through it, like the silence of birds that creates space by the almost imperceptible movements of their enormous wings.*<sup>62</sup> Or like the silence of poems by János Pilin-





Fig. 22. Endre Bálint: *Untitled*, paper, collage, 315 × 665 mm, Kecskemét, Magyar Fotográfiai Múzeum (Hungarian Museum of Photography), inv. no. 2012.253. HUNGART © 2024

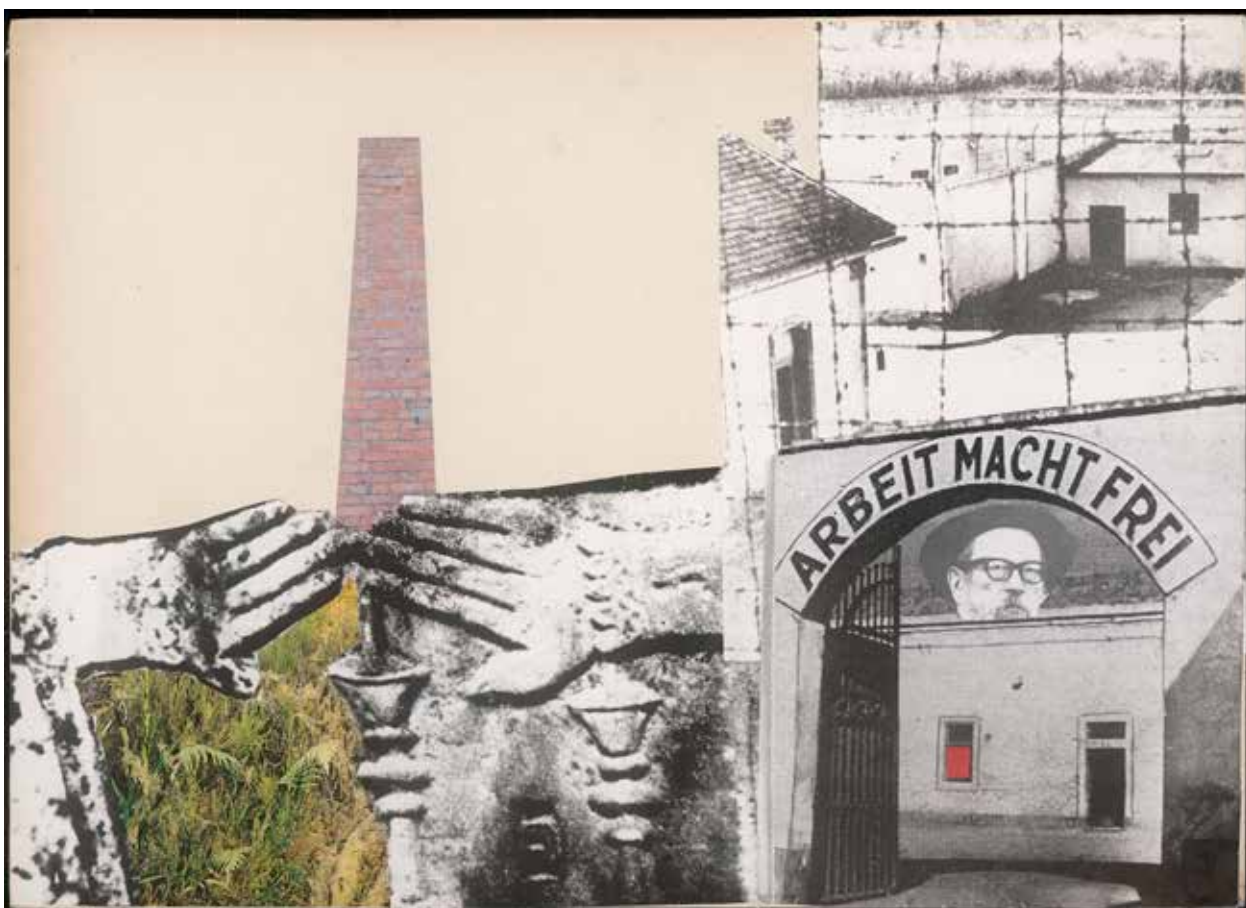


Fig. 23. Endre Bálint: *Arbeit macht frei*, paper, collage, 500 × 700 mm, Kecskemét, Magyar Fotográfiai Múzeum (Hungarian Museum of Photography), gyarapodási napló (growth log) no. 8/2007. HUNGART © 2024

szky, a poet agonizing over the possibilities of poetry after Auschwitz and seeking viable modes of utterance after the Holocaust. It is a poetry in which the weighty rhythm of words written and silent ellipses (see the blank parts of Bálint's pages!) creates a vast space suspended between allusions to cultural history, in which many of us can place and recollect what we know and what we have experienced (Figs 23–24). Bálint's late montages that evoke genocide, mass death, and the Shoah are characterized less by the nimble and light virtuosity of the earlier ones. Instead, their mood and composition seem to reflect far more a memory of the *ars poetica* expressed in the dramatic montages of the old and long lost friend, Lajos Vajda (1908–1941): spiritual asceticism as an opposition to the demonic, something Bálint had truly admired in his friend. *I have to hurry*, writes Bálint in a text fragment inspired by the poet Dezső Tandori, *because I have an appointment for 1987 with a painter who has been dead for a long time ...*<sup>63</sup> In a photomontage made on January 1, 1986, Bálint pasted a date above his name next to the row of full chalices: the year 1988 can be seen in the

image (Fig. 25). As is fitting for a true avant-garde artist who believes the present is not a remnant of the past, but rather comes about from the desired future,<sup>64</sup> and one who would perhaps wish to delay the encounter a little, Bálint changed the last digit of the 198... date by emphatically pasting an 8 over it. It is as if he resorted to magic, like a real surrealist, the first of whom appeared on the stage of history – according to Walter Benjamin,<sup>65</sup> who learned a lot from Brecht – in the figure of Stavrogin, Dostoevsky's protagonist as a surrealist *avant la lettre*, whose farewell letter was incidentally also recited by Péter Breznyik, friend and mate of Bálint's emigrant son. The great Bawd would not wait, however. Endre Bálint passed away in May 1986.

*I'm bored. My cape, please.  
Before you commit anything,  
consider the rose garden,  
A single rose bush rather,  
or one rose, gentlemen.*  
(János Pilinszky, Stavrogin's Farewell)

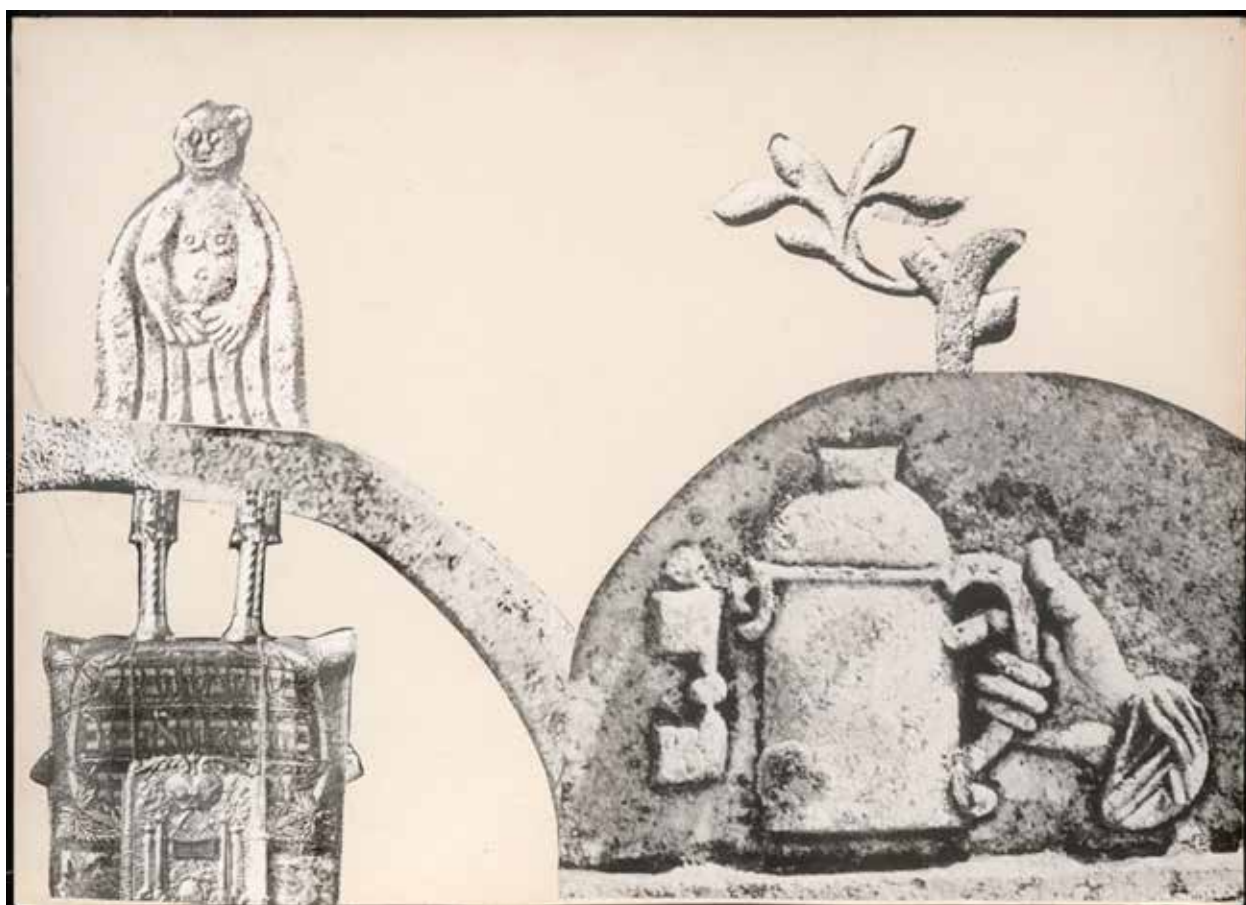


Fig. 24. Endre Bálint: *Untitled*, paper, collage, 490 × 687 mm, Kecskemét, Magyar Fotográfiai Múzeum (Hungarian Museum of Photography), gyarapodási napló (growth log) no. 8/2007. HUNGART © 2024

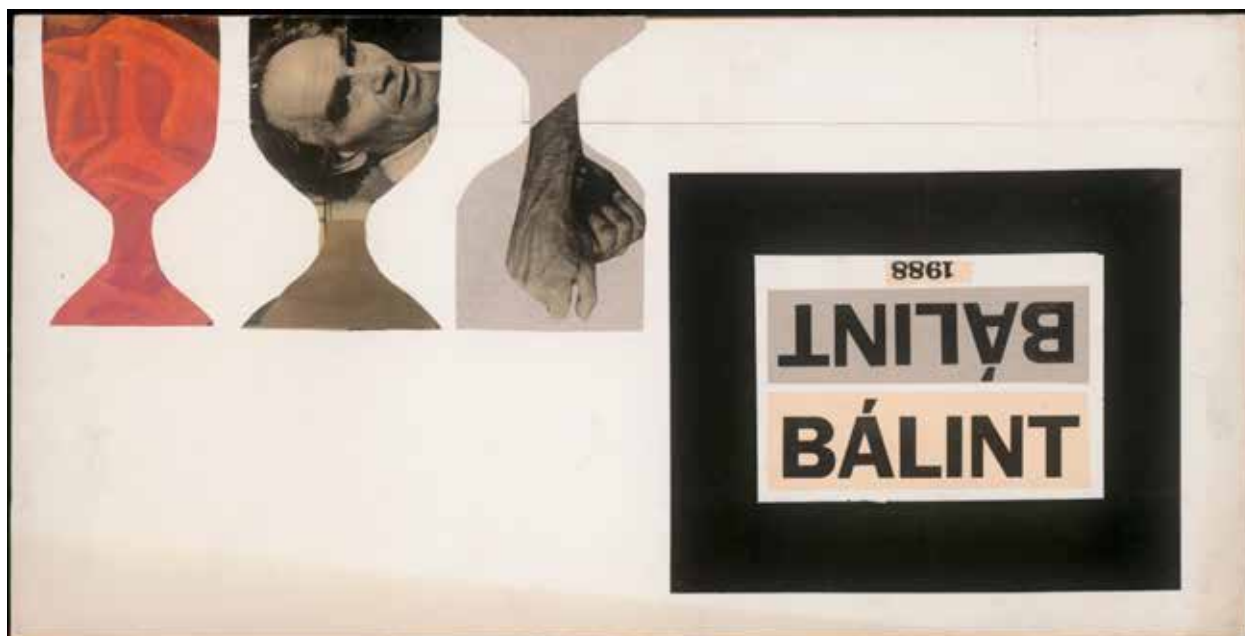


Fig. 25. Endre Bálint: *Untitled*, 1986, paper, collage, 300 × 598 mm, Kecskemét, Magyar Fotográfiai Múzeum (Hungarian Museum of Photography), inv. no. 2012.251. HUNGART © 2024

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This study is an extended and revised version of the paper written in 2014 to honour the 100th anniversary of the birth of Endre Bálint. First published in Hungarian in 2014 on the website of the Hungarian Museum of Photography in Kecskemét: [http://fotomuzeum.hu/media/tanulmanyok/1399636606\\_Balint100\\_PerenyeiM\\_MFM.pdf](http://fotomuzeum.hu/media/tanulmanyok/1399636606_Balint100_PerenyeiM_MFM.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> BÁLINT 1984, 151–152. The artist József JAKOVITS, who also excelled in the genre of the photomontage, was Bálint's friend, brother-in-law (artist Júlia Vajda's husband) and former co-tenant, a resident of a famous apartment-studio, an avant-garde “island” that became a cult space over time: the “henhouse”, as Bálint called it, at 1 Rottenbiller Street, Budapest. About this cult space Gyula Kozák writes this: “Although 1 Rottenbiller Street existed in reality only from 1948 to 1982 (i.e. from the expulsion of the artists' colony from Ady Endre Street, Budapest until Júlia Vajda's death in 1982), its origins go back to the beginning of the 20th century, and since its influence is still felt today, we must extend these 35 years in time, and without specifically marking its beginning, we define its end as today, and today is always the moment when the reader reads these lines.” KOZÁK 2015, 9. Péter György refers to the studio flat at 1 Rottenbiller Street as “an authentic world outside the closed envelope of the Kádár era, which, even if in certain respects turned towards the past, was much closer to contemporary Europe than the official culture of Hungary at the time.” That is, he considers it as a real space of continuity between the neo-avant-garde generation and the earlier avant-garde artists with the legacy of their oeuvres, mainly with a leftist critical attitude as part of it. GYÖRGY 1992, 24–25.

<sup>3</sup> *Expozíció – fotó / művészet* [Exposition. Photo/Art], exhibition at the Lajos Hatvany Museum, Hatvan, October 24, 1976 – January 31, 1977. <http://www.c3.hu/collection/koncept/images/expozicioszovmain.html>. The exhibition was reconstructed in 2017, 17 January – 24 February, at Vintage Gallery, Budapest, curated by Flóra Barkóczy, titled: *Exposition – Photo/Art 1976/2017*. About this recent exhibition and the continuity of the montage technique in the Hungarian avant-garde, as well the correspondence between psychology and the artistic process through the technique of montage, see PERENYEI 2017.

<sup>4</sup> There is a clearly articulated position in texts by these authors (Bertolt Brecht, László Moholy-Nagy and Walter Benjamin): the question is not whether photography is art, but what the artist's task could be in a visual environment dominated by the technical image and reproduction, and the ubiquitous presence of photography in visual culture and the inevitable impact of it on vision. The significance

of this perspective cannot be over-emphasised, even today, in the age of media-convergence, intermediality of artforms and digital technologies. Benjamin's often cited seminal text, BENJAMIN 1934, BENJAMIN 1969 and BENJAMIN 1972 owe much to Brecht's and Moholy-Nagy's works and the germane ideas of *indivisible education* and the *integration of arts* are also pivotal points in Moholy-Nagy's oeuvre, see MOHOLY-NAGY 1947.

<sup>5</sup> ERDÉLY 1967, 25–28. Miklós Erdély is the “master-figure” of the Hungarian neo-avant-garde. For a concise overview of his oeuvre in English see the writing of art historian László Beke, who played a decisive role in the development of Hungarian conceptual art. BEKE 1986 / 2008, 2–29.

<sup>6</sup> *Montázs kiállítás* [Montage Exhibition], Budapest: Young Artists' Club, 1975. Participants: Endre Bálint, Miklós Erdély, András Halász, Zsigmond Károlyi, László Méhes, László Najmányi, Péter Türk, and János Vető.

<sup>7</sup> The third wave of Hungarian avant-garde emerged with Lajos KASSÁK's return from emigration in 1926, the publication of the journal *Dokumentum* (Document), the performance of the Munka Circle, and the group of New Progressive Artists. It is worth noting here that Endre Bálint himself writes about Kassák (on his 70th anniversary in 1957) emphasizing Kassák's creative power across media boundaries, textual and visual forms. “I feel that I cannot fulfil the task of separating the writer from the painter, the artist from the poet; it is as if I had to operate on conjoined twins... *Dokumentum* (Document), *Tett* (Act), *Munka* (Work), *Kortárs* (Contemporary) – these were his (Kassák's) journals, and also *Alkotás* (Creation), which was torn from his hands as if it had been taken away from him as a means of creation.” BÁLINT 1957/1977, 8 and BÁLINT 1972-1, 78.

<sup>8</sup> PERENYEI 2004-1 and PERENYEI 2004-2.

<sup>9</sup> KÖRNER 1976.

<sup>10</sup> Besides Endre Bálint's works, the works on display at the exhibition included photomontages among others by Lajos Kassák, Lajos Vajda, Dezső Korniss, Júlia Vajda and József Jakovits, Imre Bak's montages made by cutting up and rotating picture postcards (1974), the *Catastrophy-series* (1972) made with a double-exposure and internal montage technique by Béla Kondor, museum tautologies by Ákos Birkás, a montage study by Gusztáv Hámos (1974) and time sequences by László Haris (1975–76). For the works presented in the Exposition 1976 exhibition visit <http://www.c3.hu/collection/koncept/images/expozicio3.html>

<sup>11</sup> c.f. HORNYIK 2014.

<sup>12</sup> BÁLINT 1957/1977, 8 and BÁLINT 1972-1, 77–78.

<sup>13</sup> ROMÁN 2004.

<sup>14</sup> In addition to the widely accepted view on the correspondence between the leftist cultural critique and montage-technique, I would like to point out here a psychological-mental disposition with a profound affection towards fragments, which is clearly articulated in Bálint's recollections, "I owe the most decisive impact of recent years to the Catalan Museum in Barcelona. (...) In 1959, I spent two days in Barcelona. (...) I ran around the city and especially the Catalan Museum, where, strangely, I was most impressed by the frescoes in fragments. Ruined frescoes that had been removed from their original places. The fragmented parts were held together by concrete or cement. The remaining parts were arranged like maps between dead fields, which somehow touched me. Later, I tried to articulate to myself why it was the fragments that had moved me so strongly. It was because, in a way, our whole existence today feels like a fragmentary existence. The unity of the world that characterised the Gothic Age and also, earlier, the collective ages filled with religion and with faith, has disappeared – it came shattered to pieces on the steps of civilisation. We breathe in fragments, I would say."

ROZGONYI 1964/1977, 4. Walter Benjamin's Arcade Project provides a convincing and timeless example of the aesthetic attraction to the fragment, to the cut-out and to embracing incompleteness over completion. BENJAMIN 2002.

<sup>15</sup> ERDÉLY 1977, 26–27; republished in ERDÉLY 1991, 93–98.

<sup>16</sup> Jean-Luc GODARD's article 'Montage, mon beau souci' [Montage, my fine care] is mentioned by Miklós Erdély in his text titled 'Hunger for Montage', in PETERNÁK 1991, 151.

<sup>17</sup> BÁLINT 1984, 130–131. The theatre group that István Bálint was a member of was initially known as the Kassák House Studio (Squat Theatre), then, in the years when it was banned, from 1972 to its members' exile, it came to be renamed the Dohány Street Room Theatre. Its core members left Hungary in two groups in early 1976: Péter Halász, Anna Koós, their daughter Judit Ráhel Halász (Galus), Péter Brezníky, István Bálint, his wife Marianne Kollár, their daughter Eszter Bálint, and the daughters of Éva Buchmüller, Borbála Major and Rebeka Major. Their shared professional life in the theater continued in New York under the name Squat Theatre (1977–85). See KOÓS 2009.

<sup>18</sup> HORÁNYI 1977, 82–83. "There is a realm of reality – the flow of images without conscious control, or at most with loose control – in which events follow the principle of montage." Ferenc Mérei's contribution to the debate on montage offers a link that is still relevant. His research of the dream language, the semiotic approach to the structure of mental images could be re-visited in the context of present-day psychoanalytic research that, with a focus on Sándor Ferenczi's legacy, makes more understandable the splitting of the psyche both in a traumatic and a progressive sense. See SOREANU 2018.

<sup>19</sup> In his text Miklós Erdély makes reference to Freud's dream theory and he quotes Max Ernst's *La Femme 100 têtes* as Bálint's only direct prefiguration. ERDÉLY 1977, 27. "As we have already said, few in Europe have mastered the genre of photomontage to the level Bálint did. His only direct predecessor can be Max Ernst's *La Femme 100 têtes*, this series of steel-engraving montages. While there are a number of similarities in the way Bálint and Ernst connect the motifs, it must be noted that Max Ernst's montages – due to their very material – move rather a narrow field of associations."

Max Ernst's other collage-novel, *Une semaine de bonté*, can be brought into association with Endre Bálint's montage-book, *Ancient Virtues*. A Hungarian animation-film entitled *The Monologue*, made by the painters Dezső Korniss and György Kovásznai in 1963, also shows thought-inspiring similarities with Max Ernst's collage-books in terms of evocations of the past and dream-like effects conveyed by the motif. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duIN5vfKeR8>

<sup>20</sup> ARAGON 1969, 17–18. "Max Ernst, a daydreamer-painter (...) In his work, the gluing process is a poetic method whose purpose is in full contrast to the cubist collage, whose intention is entirely realistic." and see Claude Cahun's androgynous persona, the photomontages weaved into her text as examples of the surrealists' transgression, a revolt in terms of genre crossovers and gender-roles. SHAW 2017, 100–195 and rozgonyi 1964/1977, 2–7. Bálint says: "noone who approached my work with clear eyes and a pure heart failed to notice the importance of dreams for me. (...) that it is not a question of drawing specific dreams. I would consider that rather vulgar. (...) I have the feeling that I have somehow populated my world with my dreams, or rather, my world is identical with the world of my dreams, which I have created by populating it."

<sup>21</sup> Louis Aragon's expression : ARAGON 1969, 29. Original "expressions toutes faites", see ARAGON 1965.

<sup>22</sup> On style as bricolage and on the revival of Dada gestures, see HEBDIDGE 1995. On montage as a key term in the description of formal works by the subcultural neo-avant-garde see HAVASRÉTI 2006.

<sup>23</sup> Collage was also a catchword and organizing principle of the opening tableau of the exhibition *David Bowie Is*, at London's Victoria and Albert Museum in 2013. Bowie's changing image was presented by tracing the various components selected from art, design, subcultural and pop cultural sources and recombined by the artist.

<sup>24</sup> Más-Kép. Experimentális fotográfia az elmúlt két évtizedben Magyarországon [Different View. Experiments in Photography of the Last Twenty Years in Hungary], exhibition, Budapest: Ernst Múzeum, 1989.

<sup>25</sup> Miklós Mészöly's phrase in his opening speech written for one of Endre Bálint's photomontage exhibitions (*Műcsarnok/Kunsthalle*, 1972): HUN–REN Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Művészettörténeti Intézet [HUN–REN Research Centre of the Humanities, Institute of Art History], Adattár [Archives] C – 1 – 170 / VI. 230–233. Mészöly refers to Bálint's extended, in those years not innocuous (not without risks) trip to Paris: the artist left the country in 1957 with a passport and returned to Hungary in the summer of 1962.

<sup>26</sup> Más-kép / Different View, Budapest: Ernst Museum, 1989. (page 15 and 34) The list preserved the details of the displayed works among them the six montage-works by Endre Bálint (page 15) and the four photomontages on blue base made by József Jakovits (page 34).

<sup>27</sup> Scarce documentation can be found at the Library of *Műcsarnok*, Budapest. Here I wish to thank Miklós Peteránk for providing me access to the detailed list of artworks at the exhibition *Different View*, and for discussing its significance.

<sup>28</sup> A far from full list of the other artists exhibited there includes Béla Kondor, Géza Perneczky, László Rajk, Péter Türk, László Haris, Endre Tót, Károly Schmal, Tibor Várnagy, El Kazovsky, Tibor Hajas, János Vető, László Najmányi (a.k.a. David O'Clock, living in New York at the time).

<sup>29</sup> BÁLINT 1977, 9.

<sup>30</sup> *A nyolcadik templom. Bálint Endre (1914–1986) művészete* [The Eighth Temple. The Art of Endre Bálint (1914–1986)], Museum of Fine Arts, Hungary – Hungarian National Gallery, February 1– May 11, 2014, curated by Marianna Kolozsvári.

<sup>31</sup> On the Tribe, see ROMÁN 2004. The roots of the Tribe, the *oppo*(sition), go back through the members' ties to the Communist movement all the way to Kassák's Munka Circle and the fraction ousted from the Circle. Bálint refers to his best friend, László Lux, also a Tribe member, as “a cleverly witty Dada talker” in BÁLINT 1984, 116. Ferenc Mérei, in his toast for Endre Bálint's birthday event, held on the “65-year one-month and six-day anniversary of his birth”, addresses Bálint as “Bálint Endre Béla Levente Balassa (in Hungarian: Saint André des Arts, i.e. the famous Bishop Saint Valentinianus)”. The text *Hetvenkedünk – hetvenkedünk* is dated December 1, 1979. HUN–REN Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Művészettörténeti Intézet [HUN–REN Research Centre of the Humanities, Institute of Art History], Adattár [Archives] C – 1 – 170 / VI – 874–877. For more details on the Tribe, see also K. HORVÁTH 2005.

<sup>32</sup> This is also noted by József Román and Anna Koós (Román 2004 and KOÓS 2009).

<sup>33</sup> BÁLINT 1984, 133.

<sup>34</sup> See note 14.

<sup>35</sup> See note 17.

<sup>36</sup> Beside Bálint's late photomontages, I have been studying other works from his late period as well (e.g. PERENYEI 2020; art brut works, and visionary buildings): a particular feature of late works is the aesthetic signs of sprezzatura, corresponding to an experience of dissolution, stripping away a compulsion to conform in the aesthetic sense. See SAID 2006 and CLARK 2006.

<sup>37</sup> Tibor Hajas's *Self-Fashion Show* and Tamás Szentjóbý's *Centaur* were made in the mid-seventies, and El Kazovsky's montages, known as the “Vajda Sheets”, were made in the second half of the seventies. In the latter, El Kazovsky paraphrases and redraws Lajos Vajda's paintings, superimposing his own motifs and arranging it all in tableaux (the base is presumably a mass printed invitation card to a Lajos Vajda exhibition). An analysis of these sheets deserves a separate study in the context of the Superfluous Copy Group. On El Kazovsky's “Vajda Sheets” see Katalin CSERJÉS, “...csak a végtelenben elérhető...”. El Kazovszkij „Vajda-lapjai”-ról (“... only attainable in infinity...”) On El Kazovsky's Vajda Sheets see CSERJÉS 2012.

<sup>38</sup> The photograph is published with relevant data in KOÓS 2009. Thanks are due to Borbála Major for her help with a precise identification of photographic details in Bálint's photomontage.

<sup>39</sup> In relation to the circle of recurring motives in Bálint's pictorial world and late montage-images, notice must be made of the motif of Swabian folk costumes, which touched Bálint due to his wartime experience, namely the memory of Swabian women who hid Jewish people in the years of persecution. “In 1954, I came across a booklet on Swabian folk costumes, with an enormous number of photos of Swabian peasant women wearing festive dresses, headscarves, ribbons and bows. Then I started drawing after these photos: a whole series, series of some 100 – 110 drawings, which I combined with ornamental motifs from Hungary and the Felvidék (southern Slovakia), drawings of signboards

and architectural objects, such as the tower of the castle in Sárospatak and the peasant Baroque gates with guard-posts, using the method of translucent motifs fist cultivated by Vajda, influenced by Russian film-montage, and which I then adopted from him as a method with full awareness – one could say with full intellectual awareness – and also with the warmth of my emotions. A kind of Eastern European art unfolded from these drawings, inspired by and imbued with Swabian folk costumes, which was considered abroad to have a very strong connection with Hungarian folk art. For this reason, my whole pictorial practice was seen as Oriental art and not Western, almost by all of my foreign reviewers.” ROZGONYI 1964/1977, 2–7.

<sup>40</sup> Miklós MÉSZÖLY quotes Endre BÁLINT's ars poetica in his opening speech (*Műcsarnok/Kunsthalle*, Budapest, 1972) and he lists the paradoxical associations of Bálint's world of images: *irreverence within asceticism, devotion within frivolity, a smirk within being shaken, reproach within humility, holding one accountable within resignation, playfulness within tragedy, challenge within love, protest within understanding, being unsated within arrival, night within day*. HUN–REN Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Művészettörténeti Intézet [HUN–REN Research Centre of the Humanities, Institute of Art History], Adattár [Archives] C – 1 – 170 /VI. 218–222. Árpád Mezei writes about hybridity as a surrealist worldview: MEZEI 1984.

<sup>41</sup> BÁLINT 1972, 192.

<sup>42</sup> ERDÉLY 1977, 26–27, and ERDÉLY 1991, 93–98.

<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless from a fresh research we learned about a pilot of a forgotten Hungarian TV-series for children: *Draw with us!* A television series planned to consist of a pilot and 11 episodes, the idea was inaugurated in 1965, and the program was realized between 1966–70 after the concept of the art historian and art critic Géza Perneckzy, who emigrated to West Germany in 1970. See Katalin AKNAI: *Géza Perneckzy: Draw with Us! Where Did a Pioneering Program Disappear?* upcoming in 2024.

<sup>44</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IrsKPKjGF\\_Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IrsKPKjGF_Y) Dezső Korniss and György Kovásznai, who worked at Pannónia Film Studio (Budapest) in the second half of the sixties, use this technique in their co-authored animated films, including the opening credits of *The Lion Is Ready to Jump*, which made the promising opening credits far more exciting than the naïve spy movie parody itself.

<sup>45</sup> *Fotómontázsok* [Photomontages], Exhibition Hall of the Mór Jókai Cultural Center, 1977. Opening by Miklós Erdély. Endre BÁLINT: *Kérés a látogatókhoz* [A Request to the Visitors], HUN–REN Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Művészettörténeti Intézet [HUN–REN Research Centre of the Humanities, Institute of Art History], Adattár [Archives] C – 1 – 170 /VI. 114. ARAGON 1969.

<sup>46</sup> *Exposition – Photo/Art 1976/2017*, see note 3.

<sup>47</sup> *Kollázsok/Collages*, exhibition of Endre Bálint at Vintage Gallery in Budapest, 2014; exhibition „Bálint 100” at the Hungarian Museum of Photography in Kecskemét, 2014; *A nyolcadik templom. Bálint Endre (1914–1986) művészete* [The Eighth Temple. The Art of Endre Bálint (1914–1986)], centenary exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts and Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest, February 1 – May 11, 2014, curated by Marianna Kolozsvári.

<sup>48</sup> On Bálint's photomontage series, see PERENYEI, 2004-1, 31–43 and PERENYEI 2004-2, 88–137.



<sup>49</sup> ARAGON 1969, 35. "Collage is poor. It will be a long time before its value is recognised (...) Everyone thinks they can do it."

<sup>50</sup> Bálint's late montages are often untitled, lacking the witty titles that the artist conceived in his repeated viewings. This „unfinished” state of the works may be due to the speed of the late-style, the quantity of the photo-montages, the overwhelming impact of image-allusions, and the lack of personal time.

<sup>51</sup> See *Ways of Seeing*, a television series created mainly by John Berger. BBC, 1972.

<sup>52</sup> Because of the rare translated versions of the Brechtian photo-book it is worth to mention that a Hungarian variant of Brecht's photo-epigrams was published in 1980: BRECHT 1980.

<sup>53</sup> The Hungarian edition of 1980 welcomed and emphasized the anti-fascist aspect of the Brechtian photo-epigrams.

<sup>54</sup> BROOMBERG & CHANARIN 2013 is a work that makes eminently clear how currently relevant the recycled selection of media images, including film and photographic images newly accessible due to media convergence, and the juxtaposition of their details are. The co-authors take certain pages out of Bertolt Brecht's book (a newspaper cutout with an accompanying four-line epigram) and turn them into photomontages by pasting media images from our present, thereby updating, critically re-working and consequently amplifying the effect of the montages composed of the newspaper images collected by Brecht and the epigrams written for the images. Their work won the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize in 2013.

<sup>55</sup> Re-photographing his works is a proper tool for the reservation and transmigration of BÁLINT's motifs through different mediums, too. And see note 39.

<sup>56</sup> Letter by Ferenc Mérei, dated September 21, 1965. HUN-REN Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Művészettörténeti Intézet [HUN-REN Research Centre of the Humanities, Institute of Art History], Adattár [Archives] C – 1 – 170 / VI – 215–217. Miklós Erdély also prefers and commends the avoidance of unwieldy symbols in Bálint's photomontages.

<sup>57</sup> See more a detailed description of the experience fragment in Lacanian terms in: PERENYEI 2017 (English version is forthcoming) and about psychic fragments see SOREANU 2018.

<sup>58</sup> Bálint wrote on his own montage-technique: "I could almost say that the montage is created according to extremely formal criteria," said Bálint around the same time, contributing to the montage controversy, "so there is no conscious determination, I only realise afterwards, usually only two or three or four months later, how the internal apparatus of the psychological process worked, and the title is almost always born at that point. [...] The form of photomontage that I cultivate is very strongly linked to so-called surrealist associative composition." This can explain, why his late works lack titles, in many cases. He returned after months to his works to understand what he had done, and to give title to them. HORÁNYI 1977, 40–41.

<sup>59</sup> See note 39.

<sup>60</sup> Kitaj decided to leave England, his chosen home, and to return to California after his wife's death, which happened during a period of critical attacks and debates prompted by an exhibition he had in London.

<sup>61</sup> SURÁNYI 1978 (downloaded: [http://home.fazekas.hu/~lsuranyi/BE\\_fotomontazsokrol.pdf](http://home.fazekas.hu/~lsuranyi/BE_fotomontazsokrol.pdf))

<sup>62</sup> BÁLINT 1984, 175.

<sup>63</sup> BÁLINT, 1984, 137.

<sup>64</sup> Árpád Mezei analyzes André Breton's view of time, a future-oriented one, in which the present is understood as a product of the future rather than the past. It is the imagined and desired future rather than the memories of the past that shape the present. MEZEI 1984, 39–40.

<sup>65</sup> BENJAMIN 1990, 188 and BENJAMIN 2019, 220. "One might, to be more exact, select from Dostoyevsky's entire work the one episode that was actually not published until about 1915, 'Stavrogin's Confession' from *The Possessed*. This chapter, which touches very closely on the third canto of the *Chants de Maldoror*, contains a justification of evil in which certain motifs of Surrealism are more powerfully expressed than by any of its present spokesmen. For Stavrogin is a Surrealist avant la lettre. No one else understood, as he did, how naïve is the view of the Philistines that goodness, for all the manly virtue of those who practice it, is God inspired; whereas evil stems entirely from our spontaneity, and in it we are independent and self-sufficient beings."

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